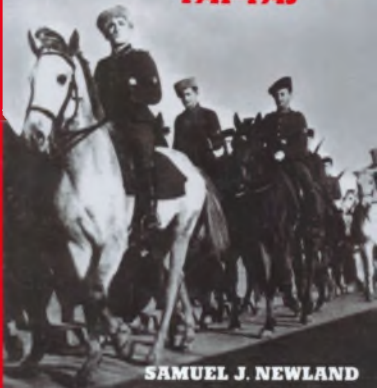


COSSACKS

IN THE

GERMAN ARMY

1941-1945



SAMUEL J. NEWLAND

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U.S. Army War College



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To my father, Harry E. Newland,
who initiated my love for History,
to my mother, Margaret R. Newland,
who encouraged it, and to my wife, Rhonda,
who serves as both my most valued critic and
primary inspiration. I owe the three of you
more than words can tell.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
List of Maps	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Introduction	1
1. Barbarossa: its Origins and Successes	9
2. Exceptions to the Rule	23
3. Who Can Wear the Field Grey?	44
4. The Cossacks: the Tsar's Praetorian Force	64
5. The De-Slavization of the Cossacks	86
6. Mielau: Organization and Training	110
7. Self-Government for Soviet Nationalities – a <i>Wehrmacht</i> initiative	127
8. Who Leads the Cossacks? Who Champions their Cause?	138
9. The Cossack Division in Combat	150
10. Requiem for the Cossack Corps	170
Notes	178
Appendices	197
A. German-U.S. Army Rank Equivalencies	
B. Authorized Strength of German Military Organizations	
C. Organization of the Cossack Cavalry Corps	
D. Corps Staff Structure, Cossack Cavalry Corps	
E. Organization of a Horse Cavalry Regiment	
Bibliography	203
Index	210

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	A small village in Galicia erects an arch to greet German troops.	26
2.	Zakopane, Galicia welcomes the German "liberators".	27
3.	The populace of Reval, Estonia, greets the German soldiers, 1941.	27
4.	Eastern volunteers receive a blessing on entering German service, 1943.	31
5-7.	National Socialist propaganda showing the backward nature of the Soviet Union.	36-7
8-11.	Soviet prisoners at Senne-Krakenhof camp, 1941-42.	40-2
12.	Kuban Cossack refugee choir in Parma, Italy, in 1928.	85
13.	A column of Cossack soldiers wearing German insignia, Germany, 1943.	88
14.	Lt.-Col. Nicholas Nazarenko, Don Cossack, and Col. Michael Zaretsky, Kuban Cossack, Belgrade, 1944.	91
15.	Col. Ivan Kononov, 1943.	95
16.	Authorized Insignia for Cossack Volunteers.	100
17.	Col. Helmuth von Pannwitz.	105
18.	Cossack volunteers in action in 1943.	107
19.	A traditional Cossack dance at the front in 1943.	108
20.	Cossack soldiers in 1943.	112
21.	German troops withdrawing from the Caucasus, 1943.	113
22.	A skilled Cossack horseman.	119
23.	Col. Constantine Wagner, 1945.	148
24.	A Cossack unit in France, 1944.	157
25.	A Cossack relaxing with <i>Wehrmacht</i> and S.S. soldiers, 1944.	159

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941–1945

26.	A military funeral in Sisack, Croatia, 1944.	161
27.	German officers of the Cossack Division, Sisack, Croatia, 1944.	162
28.	Von Pannwitz, von Schultz and the Cossacks in Croatia, 1944.	163
29.	Gen. von Pannwitz giving a funeral address in 1944, Sisack, Croatia.	163

LIST OF MAPS

Cossack Hosts in Europe and Asia, 1914	68
The Cossack Hosts in Europe, 1914	69
The Caucasus under German administration	130
Migration of anti-Soviet Cossacks, 1942–45	136
Operation <i>Schach</i> , anti-partisan sweep of the 1st Cossack Brigade, 1944	160
Major engagements of the 1st Cossack Cavalry Division and the XV Cossack Cavalry Corps, Yugoslavia 1943–45	165

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INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1960s, newspaper and magazine articles throughout the Western world have given attention to a fascinating movement within the Soviet Union, entitled *Samizdat*. This short and comparatively simple Russian word describes a complex literary protest movement within the Soviet Union which has plagued the Soviet leadership since the late 1950s. Russian writers such as Yuli Daniel, Andrei Siniavskii, Andrei Amalrik, and, of course, Alexander Solzhenitzyn, have openly criticized Soviet society and the Soviet leadership, giving the Western world an insight into the workings of the dissidents within the Russian intellectual community.

Given the interest within the Western world for this protest movement, it is surprising that a number of well-read educated people have no knowledge at all of another time in the twentieth century when thousands of Soviet citizens protested against the hated Stalinist system. In fact, during the Second World War, a large number of Soviet citizens took up arms and fought alongside the invading German army. They did this, in some cases simply to survive, and in others to bring about the destruction of the Marxist state, or, more specifically, Stalin's version of the Marxist state. Although some 40 years have passed since the beginning of the Soviet-German war, the German utilization of foreign volunteers remains an almost forgotten chapter of the Second World War.

It should be known, however, that over a million men with ancestral roots in the Soviet Union fought together with the German armed forces against Stalin's government. At the end of the Second World War, there were still some 700,000 men of Russian or Soviet backgrounds serving in an official capacity with the German armed forces.¹ Even today, over 40 years later, this tends to be largely unknown or misunderstood, even within the academic community.

I first became intrigued with this subject during the 1973-74 academic year at the University of Kansas. Beginning with the rather broad topic of Soviet volunteers in the German army, my research was narrowed to the Cossack volunteers, due to the privileged position they held among all the volunteers who fought with the Germans. To the historian they are unique, since the

history of their formations within the German army does not exist in English and, furthermore, no serious scholarly study exists in German.

These comments should not be misconstrued as implying that scholarship does not exist on the broader subject of Soviet volunteers in the German army. Since the end of the Second World War, a number of works have been published on the issue of German recruitment of Soviet soldiers. For example, in 1952, George Fischer published a book entitled *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*.² This book was perhaps the first scholarly book available to the English-speaking community which probed the background of the movement to recruit Soviet peoples into Hitler's armies. Fischer sought to evaluate the motivation of various groups in Germany for this recruitment of Russians, in addition to the motivation of the Soviet peoples for fighting with the Germans. Writing immediately after the end of the war, Fischer had the advantage of interviewing numbers of both Germans and Soviets involved in this movement. On the other hand, Fischer did not have access to the mass of documents captured in Germany at the end of the war, since at that time they were largely uncatalogued.

Alexander Dallin's book *German Rule in Russia*,³ although it was not directly concerned with the volunteer legions and their recruitment, is essential for a full understanding of that era. Dallin's work gives the reader a sound study of German attitudes toward the Soviet peoples, as well as a thorough discussion of German occupational policies. Like Fischer's study, it is somewhat dated, but it remains an accurate scholarly work which is still useful today.

The publication of these two scholarly works, both dating from the 1950s, was followed by a period during which no major works were printed in English on the subject. Then in the late 1960s, in Germany, Sven Steenberg published a biography entitled *Vlasov: Verräter oder Patriot*, translated into English as *Vlasov*.⁴ Steenberg was a Baltic German who served as an interpreter with the *Wehrmacht* on the eastern front, and personally knew a number of the people involved in the movement to recruit volunteers into the German army. His biography of General Vlasov is regarded as a sympathetic though accurate biography of the commander of the Russian Liberation Army.

An authoritative biography of General Vlasov provides a better understanding of the eastern volunteers, but of equal importance was the publication of Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt's memoirs, *Against Stalin and Hitler: Memoir of the Russian Liberation Movement*.⁵

INTRODUCTION

Like Steenberg, Strik-Strikfeldt was a Baltic German who served in the Wehrmacht in the Second World War. His memoirs, however, are of special significance since he worked with the *Fremde Heer Ost* (Foreign Armies East) section of the Wehrmacht and, after this assignment, worked very closely with Vlasov until the end of the war. Strik-Strikfeldt's book serves as a valuable primary source for this period.

In the mid-1970s, Jürgen Thorwald's study, *The Illusion: Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Armies* was published. It was General Heinz D. Herre, former military attaché at the German Embassy, in Washington, D.C., who first alerted me to Mr Thorwald's extensive records of eastern volunteers. During the war, General Heere was deeply involved with Russian volunteers and with the Wehrmacht's *Fremde Heer Ost* Section. Immediately after the war, Heere worked with the West German Intelligence Service founded by General Reinhard Gehlen, also of the *Fremde Heer Ost* Section. General Gehlen was impressed by Jürgen Thorwald's book *Es begann an der Weichsel* (published in English as *Flight in Winter*), a book on the German collapse on the eastern front, 1944–45. In a meeting in 1950, Gehlen proposed that Thorwald write a work on the Soviet volunteer movement. In return, Gehlen's German Intelligence Service would open its files on the subject and would put Thorwald in contact with all the survivors, Russian and German, with whom the German Intelligence Service had strong contacts.

True to his agreement, Gehlen provided scores of witnesses, and by 1951 Thorwald had thousands of pages of interview transcripts on the subject. This resulted in the publication of a small book entitled *Wen Sie Verderben Wollen . . . (Whom the Gods Wish to Destroy . . .)*.⁶ Although this satisfied the immediate demands of Gehlen and his staff, it was far too limited for either Thorwald or his sponsors. Critical of both German policy in the east and Anglo-American policy toward former Soviet citizens, it was not widely read. *The Illusion*, the expanded version of this earlier work, is a valuable resource document on the volunteer movement.

General Gehlen, who was so significant in shaping the policies of the *Fremde Heer Ost* Section, also wrote his memoirs in the early 1970s, which he entitled *The Service*.⁷ On the eastern volunteers, Gehlen's account is as disappointing as Strik-Strikfeldt's is revealing. Regrettably, Gehlen included only one scant chapter on 'Wooing the Russians' in his memoirs.

The most recent addition to the literature on this subject is Hans von Herwarth's book *Against Two Evils*,⁸ a title strongly reminis-

cent of Strik-Strikfeldt's memoirs. Von Herwarth's memoirs are a significant source on the topic of Soviet volunteers in the German army. He was a member of the German diplomatic service until 1941, and, of greatest significance, served with Claus von Stauffenberg in Section II of the organization division in the High Command. Furthermore, he was a close associate of General Ernst Köstring until the end of the war. His insights into both von Stauffenberg's and Köstring's careers make this an exceptionally valuable work. It was written in close cooperation with S. Frederick Starr, former Professor of History at Princeton University.

In rapid succession, in the mid-1970s, two works were published which hoped to stimulate the conscience of the Western world concerning the tragic repatriation of the eastern volunteers to the Soviet Union at the end of the war. Lord Nicholas Bethel's *The Last Secret*⁹ and Jules Epstein's *Operation Keelhaul*¹⁰ heavily criticized the Western powers for repatriating thousands of eastern volunteers and their families to certain imprisonment or death in the Soviet Union. Both works, at least to some extent, accomplished their goals, but ultimately have not contributed to a larger understanding of why the eastern volunteers fought on the German side or how the Germans treated their foreign legions.

Despite the number of excellent general works that are available on the subject, there are many aspects of the German programme to utilize Russian volunteers that are virtually unresearched. Perhaps the most intriguing area, at least to me, concerns the decidedly different policies which the Germans used toward the numerous Soviet peoples. Though the ideology of the Führer and of the National Socialist movement was anti-Slavic, even Hitler and S.S. *Reichsführer* Himmler supported the recruitment of some Slavic people. Needless to say, this is decidedly contradictory, but both Hitler and Himmler had reasons for supporting such policies. Their support was seemingly given to Soviet peoples who had distinguished themselves by their tradition of resistance to Bolshevism or to people who exhibited warrior-like qualities. New racial studies carried out by National Socialist ideologists found them to be non-Slavs, and such people were openly employed to fight in the German army from the earliest stages of the German-Soviet war.

The one national group which received the most preferential treatment, and seemingly eluded the worst pitfalls of being Slavs in Hitler's occupied Europe, were the Cossacks. The Cossacks, like other Soviet citizens, were first recruited by the German commanders in the field. In 1942 their units received recognition

INTRODUCTION

and wore their own insignia, especially designed for them by the German army. By early 1943, as Hitler was questioning the reliability of the volunteer units and ordering their dissolution, authorization was given to create a Cossack division which trained throughout the summer of 1943. Eventually, by 1945, the Cossack Division had expanded into the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, commanded by General Helmuth von Pannwitz. It is intriguing that this happened not only with Hitler's knowledge but with his support.

A study of the recruitment of any volunteer legion in this period is a decided challenge. For example, the man best able to relate the story of the Cossack Division/Corps was its commander, General von Pannwitz. True to the men he loved, von Pannwitz *chose* to accompany the Cossacks when they were repatriated by the British to the Soviet Union, and was hanged in Moscow in 1947. With him went most of the Cossack officer corps who also went to the gallows or would disappear into the labour camps. The mass of the enlisted members of Cossack corps were also repatriated and sent to the bleak camps of the Soviet Union, muting their testimony. Only after Stalin's death were the survivors released, some of whom have migrated to the West. Thus, only a handful of former officers and men of the Cossack Corps survived to give their testimony of this unique portion of Russian-German history. For example, Heinrich-Detloff von Kalben escaped imprisonment and wrote a brief history of the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, in addition to a short biography of General von Pannwitz. Both of these were printed in the German Veterans' Yearbook under the title *Deutscher Soldatenkalender* in the 1960s. Immediately following the war, Colonel Alexander von Bosse, at the request of the Army Historical Services, wrote a manuscript on the Cossack Cavalry Corps, its organization and successes. Another member of the German cadre, Wolfgang Schwarz, after a decade of labour camp imprisonment, wrote *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes*.¹¹ Eric Kern, who served with a Cossack regiment, wrote a small book entitled *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*,¹² drawing on memories of some of the survivors of the division. All of these accounts are primary source materials, written by Germans attached to the Cossack units. As primary sources, they serve a useful purpose, though they do not utilize or cite many records or documents on the subject. Needless to say, all are written from the standpoint of German military personnel, not from that of the Cossacks.

As so few Cossacks survived, the number of source works written from their perspective has been very limited. N.N. Krasnov, grandson of the White general, P.N. Krasnov, wrote his memoirs after release from a Soviet labour camp, entitling them *The Hidden Russia*.¹³ Regrettably, he devoted only a few pages to his experiences with the Cossack military units. Other than this solitary work, only General V.G. Naumenko's book, *Vyelikoye Predatelstvo (The Great Betrayal)*¹⁴ has been published from the Cossack perspective. Naumenko's book was published in New York in a very limited edition and exists only in the Russian language (it is virtually unavailable today).

Approaching the surviving Cossacks for help proved to be an interesting problem in itself. When I requested assistance from one of the leaders of the Cossack community, he replied, "After Operation Keelhaul, our people are scared to death and they don't want to recollect this event."¹⁵ Despite this very real problem, Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, son-in-law of General V.G. Naumenko, finally offered his assistance, on condition that I came to New York to discuss the Cossack Corps at length. This assistance was not without restriction since Nazarenko himself fears retribution by the Soviets, even today. Therefore, at Nazarenko's request, some geographical details given to me during the interviews cannot be used.

In soliciting assistance from the surviving German cadre, I contacted Colonel Constantine Wagner, former officer in the Don Cossack Regiment. In Colonel Wagner's opinion, a history of the Cossack recruitment could not be written since too many people were now dead, and therefore, information was simply not available. As an example, I had located the 1943 *Kriegstagebücher* (war diaries) of the Cossack Division and was searching for those of the remaining years. Colonel Wagner was well aware of the absence of the last year and one half of these war diaries. With the Cossack Corps preparing to surrender to the British in 1945, there was concern among both the Cossacks and the Germans that the Corps' records would fall into enemy hands. Therefore, the diaries for the last year and half were burned, with Colonel Wagner personally witnessing their destruction. Nicholas Mikulski, formerly with the Cossack Corps Staff, reports that some Corps' records were buried in ammunition boxes in Austria, immediately prior to the Corps' surrender. Whatever the case, the records are lost.

An additional problem is the disappearance of the German records from the office of *General der Osttruppen*.¹⁶ These were

INTRODUCTION

captured by the Allies and the existence of the files was noted by archivists in the late 1940s, but the Imperial War Museum, the U.S. National Archives and the Bundesarchiv are unable to locate them. Apparently, they have been misfiled somewhere in one of the archival centres, or have simply been lost.

Despite these obstacles, a history of Soviet volunteers in the German army, with special focus on the Cossack troops, has proved to be feasible. The records of the Foreign Armies East Section, where so much of the planning for Soviet volunteer legions occurred, have recently been de-classified and are available to researchers. The records of German divisions and army groups located in the National Archives provide many important details on methods of recruiting volunteers, policies on equipping and performance in action. Information on volunteer recruitment was also available in unpublished manuscripts written for the U.S. army by General Ernst Köstring, Ralph von Heygendorf, and Dr Hans Seraphim. A lengthy manuscript on the Cossack Corps, referred to earlier, was obtained through the National Archives. This was written by Colonel Alexander von Bosse and was extremely helpful for cross-referencing the lengthy testimony given to me by Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko.

The interviews with Nicholas Nazarenko deserve special note. Nazarenko's family left Russia in 1918, fleeing from the Bolshevik Revolution. He was brought up in Rumania and served for some time with the Rumanian army. He was sent to the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s to gather intelligence information for Rumania. He was subsequently captured and spent a considerable amount of time in the Soviet labour camps. The beginning of the Second World War found him working with underground groups in the Caucasus region. When the German army advanced across the northern coast of the Black Sea, he and his men joined them and Nazarenko fought with the German military and his fellow anti-Marxist Cossacks from the autumn of 1941 until the end of the war. Through his own testimony and as leader of the Cossack War Veterans Association, Nazarenko ultimately made the research possible. In addition, his private archives, including many original documents, have proved to be invaluable.

It is interesting that the U.S. National Archives and the Imperial War Museum have provided so much valuable material, rather than the German Archives. In fact, I approached the Military Archives at Freiburg, but they indicated that the U.S. National Archives had all of the information they possessed plus additional materials not

available at Freiburg. The Imperial War Museum located and made available an excellent set of documents concerning the Cossacks, particularly documents pertaining to Vassili Glaskow and the S.S.

Thus, although at first sight the sources available on the Cossacks seem to be somewhat meagre, the existing material is in fact quite rich for the researcher. For example, much of the material on volunteer legions in the captured German document section of the National Archives is virtually untapped. The files of the *Wehrmacht's* Organization section, the entity which formulated policies on volunteer legions, have only recently been catalogued. More importantly, the memoirs of the individuals involved in forming and commanding the volunteer legions, and the mass of documents available through the National Archives, have never been synthesized into a well-documented history of any one of the Soviet national groups which served with the Germans.

Using a wide variety of resources, this book provides a detailed examination of the background of German – or more specifically Nazi – attitudes toward the Soviet peoples. With this background established, the contradictory and amoral policy of National Socialism toward the eastern volunteers is examined, culminating in a study of German attitudes and policies toward the Cossacks. The book then traces the recruitment, training and commitment to battle of the Cossack Division, and its later enlargement into the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps in 1945.

This is the first history of Cossack troops in German service in the English language. It is to be hoped that it will provide the impetus for more research on this topic, as well as on the other Soviet nationalities in German service.

Sam J. Newland
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

BARBAROSSA: ITS ORIGINS AND SUCCESSES

And so we National Socialists turn our gaze toward the land in the East... If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her border states.

(Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*)

It is possible to suggest that from the very inception of National Socialism, a Russian, an anti-Slav campaign, was virtually inevitable. This hypothesis is readily proven by returning to the writings and speeches of the leader of the German state, Adolf Hitler, and tracing the development of his ideas on Russia and Slavic people.

His earliest thoughts on Russia were recorded in his only major political or theoretical work, *Mein Kampf*, first published in 1925. In this book Hitler set forth his ideas on a wide variety of issues including Russia, the Slavic people and Marxism. Drafted in the early phase of his political career, *Mein Kampf* indicates Hitler's belief that Russia, through the Bolshevik revolution, had been overwhelmed by the evils of world Jewry. As Hitler assessed the source of Marxist doctrine, he consistently identified the founders as Jewish. Marxism, to Hitler, was a Jewish-inspired ideology. According to him, the German people had to destroy this corrosive influence. The supposed Jewish base of Marxism is important to understand, since Hitler seemed convinced throughout his life that Marxism was a plot by international Jewry. Marxism was devised by Jews, such as Karl Marx himself, and brought to military and political success by another Jew, Leon Trotsky.¹ The contribution of non-Jewish leaders (such as Lenin and Stalin) to Marxist thought was conveniently overlooked. Hitler was certain that Marxism was dangerous to Western culture and like its spiritual roots, Zionism and Jewry, it had to be destroyed.²

The concept of Marxism as the ultimate weapon of the Jews appears throughout *Mein Kampf* and was apparently significant in

forming Hitler's opinion about Russia and its government. In his own words: "In the organized mass of Marxism he [the Jew] has found the weapon which lets him dispense with democracy and instead allows him to subjugate and govern the people with a dictatorial and brutal fist."³ From Hitler's perspective, in the new Marxist-dominated Russia, the Jew had succeeded in attaining a major step in his desire for world domination.

The emphasis of Hitler's writing in *Mein Kampf*, as it pertains to Russia, was not anti-Slav but rather anti-Semitic.⁴ The danger he sought to emphasize was not the Slav, but rather what he called Jewish Bolshevism. In the concluding phases of the work, he characterized Russia's new "Jewish" rulers in the following manner: "Furthermore, do not forget that these rulers belong to a race which combines, in a rare mixture, bestial cruelty and an inconceivable gift for lying and which today more than ever is conscious of a mission to impose its bloody oppression on a whole world."⁵

The minimal number of anti-Slavic diatribes in *Mein Kampf* should, however, not be taken as proof that Hitler was in any way tolerant towards the Slavs. In fact, his comments on the Vienna period of his life indicate a strong bitterness toward both the Jewish and Slavic elements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He felt that both were responsible for undermining the fabric of the Austrian Empire.⁶ Lengthy anti-Slavic passages were probably inappropriate for Hitler's writings in the 1920s, since his audience was most concerned with the problems that were creating heavy burdens on the German people. Hence, following the National Socialist programme, the work focused on the First World War and its legacy, the Versailles Treaty, the Jews and the Marxists, and the need for the German people to right the wrongs of Versailles and to reassert Germany's place as one of the major world powers.

Though *Mein Kampf* does not show any strong tendencies on Hitler's part to attack the Russian or Slavic peoples from a racial standpoint, it does indicate territorial designs on their part of Eastern Europe. For example, Hitler was concerned about the growing working class of Germany and the need to provide new land for this class of people. The solution for the problem of new lands was not to be found in overseas colonies but, as Hitler states: "Such a territorial policy cannot be fulfilled in the Cameroons but today almost exclusively in Europe."⁷ The solution, according to Hitler, was to be found by reclaiming former German lands supplemented with Russian lands: "If land was desired in Europe it could be

obtained by and large only at the expense of Russia and this meant that the new Reich must again set itself on the March along the Road of the Teutonic Knights of Old."⁸ Clearly Hitler wanted land, land at the expense of the Russian state, in order to build a new and powerful German Reich. This idea would form an integral part of his thinking from the 1920s until his death in 1945. The basic plan for Russia existed in *Mein Kampf*, but Hitler did not provide any substantial detail at this time in his life. It was not until the 1930s that he elaborated on his plans for Soviet Russia. By that time he was speaking not as the imprisoned or dissident politician of 1924, but as Germany's major political figure.⁹

In the early 1930s, having achieved major political status in Europe, Hitler began to address himself seriously to the east and its Slavic population. Herman Rauschning, the first National Socialist president of the Danzig senate, met with Hitler and Walter Darre in the summer of 1932. After a brief introduction to the topic of an eastern policy by Darre himself, a member of Darre's staff began to lecture on Germany's eastern space policy. According to the lecturer, a great central power (Germany) would have to ally with Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria which would serve as integral parts of the great power. Then there would be a circle of smaller dependent states. All of these would form the basis for the new German Empire. This empire would include the Baltic states, central Poland, without access to the sea and cut back to clearly ethnographical lines, a larger Hungary, Serbia and Croatia, rather than the existing Yugoslavia, a smaller Rumania, the Ukraine divided into a number of independent districts, and south Russia and the Caucasian states. This eastern Empire would be anchored by Finland in the North and Georgia (or Gruziya) in the South. The whole structure would be held together by a common army, a common trade and currency, and a common foreign policy.¹⁰

According to the lecturer, all of this would remain an idle dream unless a planned German policy of colonization was established, linked with a plan for depopulation of the Soviet Union. The great danger facing the Nordic peoples was the fertility, and hence the population growth rate, of the Slavic peoples. In order to counter this threat the Slavs had to be detached from their lands and become landless labourers or factory workers. The agricultural lands of the east had to be placed in the hands of a German ruling class. From that time onward, European races should no longer be classified in a horizontal fashion, but rather in a vertical fashion with their German elite serving as the ruling or *Herren* class of

central and eastern Europe. At this point Hitler joined the discussion, saying:

What we have discussed here must remain confidential. In the main I approve what has been said about our eastern or eastern space policy ... A nucleus of eighty to one hundred million colonizing Germans! My first task will be to create this nucleus which will not only make us invincible but will assure to us once and for all time the decisive ascendancy over all the European nations.¹¹

The nucleus of the new German Reich was to be Germany and Austria. Bohemia and Moravia would be included as well as the western sections of Poland. The Baltic states, with their sparse populations of Germans situated in high positions, would also play a significant role. The Czech people, however, were not destined to be Germanized. They were to be transported to Siberia or the Volhynian region. The Baltic peoples, however, could and would be easily Germanized.¹²

Once the war against the Soviet Union had begun, Hitler began to devote more time to his plans for the Soviet Union. Comments made in 1941 indicate he had limitless contempt for the Russian people. He characterized them as lazy and drunken, and felt they had few original ideas which contributed to civilized society.¹³ According to Hitler, the Russian people were not only drunken but they lacked the basic inventiveness necessary for people to function in modern Western society. All of their technology came from abroad and their workforce accomplished basic tasks by rote memorization or habit, rather than by thought. If Russian factories were damaged or destroyed, Hitler felt the Russians would be totally unable to rebuild them.¹⁴

His opinions of the Russian people and their attributes – or lack of them – frequently bordered on the ridiculous. In one lengthy monologue he told his cronies that Russians do not grow old, living only to the age of fifty or sixty years. Because of this, it was ridiculous to vaccinate them. All doctors and health experts would be ignored, and no vaccinations would be given to the Russians. Furthermore, no soap would be issued to get the dirt off them. The Reich would simply issue them all the alcohol and tobacco they wanted, apparently to dull their senses.¹⁵

The idea of keeping them enslaved as a subject and dirty people in a classical colonial situation seemed a favourite theme. In talking of the future of the Ukraine, Hitler said: "I am not a partisan either, of

a University of Kiev. It's better not to teach them to read. They won't love us for tormenting them with schools. We'll supply the Ukrainians with scarves, glass beads and everything that colonial people like."¹⁶

Obviously, Hitler had an extremely low opinion of the Soviet peoples and their "Jewish" masters. Not only did they represent a subhuman group of people, but they occupied a land mass that was targeted for German expansion. Consequently, as the war years passed, Hitler spent many evenings musing about his plans for Russia and the Russian people. The trend of his planning, as traced through the conversations during the period 1941-43, was to use Russia in furthering Germany's goal of becoming an autarchy.¹⁷ Germany and her satellite states were to share in the riches of the natural resources of Russia in a German sponsored economic system. Hitler reckoned that if Germany could tap the agricultural wealth of Russia, this would not only permit Germany to reach autarchy but, in addition, give her markets for her manufactured goods. No longer would Germany have to seek markets, she would merely look eastward to the plains of Russia.

The possibilities for using this land were endless. For the Germans, who (according to Hitler) loved to travel, the Crimea was to serve as their Riviera: "The beauties of the Crimea, which we shall make accessible by means of an Autobahn... we can reach the Crimea by road. Along that road lies Kiev. And Croatia, too, a tourists' paradise for us."¹⁸ But although southern Russia was to be a tourist spot, a playground for Germany, the overall objective in Hitler's mind was colonization.

Hitler saw the immense spaces of Russia as a logical area for the settlement of millions of German colonists. These Germans did not need to come only from the German Reich itself, they could also be ethnic Germans from other areas of the world. Hitler envisioned luring two or three million Germans as colonists to Europeanize the steppes of Russia. These men would come from Germany, Scandinavia, the Western European countries, and even America.¹⁹

The German settlements in the east were to be the starkest and most blatant colonial outposts, according to Hitler's ideas. He did not plan to give the indigenous inhabitants of Eastern Europe any type of education, nor did he intend to promote any type of social improvement. Germans were to be there not as "their [the Slavs'] overseers; all we are there for is to promote our own interests."²⁰ The Germans who were to organize this colonial empire were consistently told to remember this fact: that they were there only for

German interests. Germany needed grain, raw materials and markets, all of which could be found in Russia. Hitler advised his followers to ignore their conscience on the issue of exploiting a people.²¹

Hitler clearly had no interest in any self-government for the Russian people, or self-government for any nationality. On occasion, some of his key leaders attempted to promote self-government schemes, but Hitler always remained sceptical. He was clear in stating that he never again wanted any new power to rise on the steppes. In addition, he stated that any revolution would be met by a strong German reaction. If the Russians revolted, German bombers would quickly destroy their cities. Germany would rule and, according to Hitler, its rule would be clearly based on his own interpretation of the English colonial system. Just as England with 250,000 men, including 50,000 soldiers ruled 400 million Indians, so Germany with 250,000 men would rule Russia.²²

Hitler's perceptions of Russia and his plans for that state seem contradictory and, at times, unbelievably shallow. However, in spite of their vague nature, they were plans. Intriguingly, his plans for Russia never evolved during the entire war. As one author stated: "Military and political disasters had no effect on Hitler's war aims. Throughout the Russian Campaign he stated and restated these same objectives with minor variations and embellishments. A speech to Army group commanders in July, 1943, might have been delivered in July, 1941 - or in 1924."²³

To his Army commanders, Hitler's comments were quite direct. For example, on December 5, 1940, he advised the heads of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW) and *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH) that upon the conclusion of the eastern campaign Germany would create new buffer states (Ukraine, White Russia, Lithuania and Latvia), while allied states Rumania, Finland and the government-general (occupied Poland) would be expanded with newly-conquered Russian land.²⁴ The same plan was repeated to senior officers planning the invasion of Russia on March 18, 1941. At that time, Hitler told the assembled officers that the political goal of Barbarossa was to create three "Kerensky Republics" (the Baltic states, White Russia and the Ukraine), while the Caucasus, Baku and Batum could be offered to Turkey in order to bind Germany's First World War ally to the Axis.²⁵

A prime and objective witness of Hitler's intentions towards the Soviet Union was Dr Percy Schramm. Dr Schramm was a highly respected European historian with some 20 major works to his

credit. He served the first few years of the war as a *Wehrmacht* division historian. In 1943 he was ordered to Hitler's headquarters to keep the diary of the German High Command. In this capacity he was able to observe Hitler, his conferences, and the multitude of documents which reached the Führer's headquarters. Dr Schramm recognized Hitler's intent to colonize Eastern Europe by blatantly sending German settlers eastwards. According to Schramm, the Germans were to live in special *Herrenvolk*²⁶ settlements, in stark contrast to the Slavic settlements of the rural villages. For the Slavs, medical facilities or medical programmes would be kept to the bare minimum, except for birth control and abortion services. Eastern populations were not to receive any type of advanced schooling. To know German, to have the ability to read traffic signs, and to know that Berlin was the capital of the Reich was sufficient for a Slav.

Dr Schramm warned the command structure of the problems of trying to erase the national or historical consciousness of a group of people, but this was ignored by Hitler. Dr Schramm also noted the problem of a numerically inferior group attempting to suppress the identity of a larger group. In his opinion, Hitler's major error was his concept of Russia as a land inhabited by servile peasants accustomed to the lash and intent only on drinking vodka and eating. Hitler's perceptions of Russia and her people were those of the West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He totally ignored the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and, more importantly, the Russian Revolution of 1917.

To prove that such ideas were not simply ideological pipedreams, the proposed draconian policy for the Soviet Union was not without precedent. For example, in German-occupied Poland, the possession of a radio receiver was punishable by death. In most accessible Polish libraries, all books on geography and books in English and French were removed. Works on drama and opera were also removed as were scores of classical music, particularly folk music and nationalistic songs. Chopin, the famed Polish composer, was blacklisted for his nationalist appeal.²⁷

Hitler was by no means the sole influence on the formation of German policy toward the Soviet Union. Heinrich Himmler, *Reichsführer* of the S.S.,²⁸ and Alfred Rosenberg, head of the *Ostministerium*,²⁹ and the so-called philosopher of the Nazi party, were both highly influential in the formation of German policy.³⁰ But while Himmler and Rosenberg had significant impact on German plans for the Soviet Union, Hitler was the dominant influence. From 1924 to 1945, Hitler both wrote about and discussed

his plans to overrun the Russian steppes. His goal was twofold: he wanted both to destroy Jewish Bolshevism at its roots and to seize the eastern lands necessary for Germany's future greatness. As a practical politician, once he came to power, Hitler dealt first with the issues closer to the minds of the people rather than expansionist plans for Russia. His first priorities were returning Germany to a great power status and redressing the various German grievances stemming from the Treaty of Versailles. Hence, the 1930s saw Hitler rearming Germany, regaining control of the Saar, remilitarizing the Rhineland and seizing Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Until 1939 all actions were taken under the pretence of returning German lands or peoples to the Reich.

On September 1, 1939 Hitler initiated his first *Blitzkrieg* campaign against Poland which ultimately continued into the Spring of 1940, with the campaign against the Low Countries and France. Within three months of the attack on Western Europe and during the unsuccessful campaign against England, Hitler began discussing his plans to attack Russia. The first official word of his intent came when General Alfred Jodl, *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, Chief of Staff,³¹ announced to Section L of the *Wehrmacht* High Command on July 29, 1940 that Hitler had decided to rid the world "once and for all" of the danger of Bolshevism by an attack on the Soviet Union. This attack was to be carried out at the earliest possible moment, which was May 1941.³²

General Jodl, explaining Hitler's reasons for such an attack, indicated that in Hitler's opinion, a collision with Bolshevism was inevitable. Since Germany was at the height of her military power, this would be the most logical time to launch an attack. Hitler cited Russia as the last power on the continent able to oppose German plans. If Russia were subdued, this would be the best method to force England to make peace, since she would then be totally alone.³³ Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the *OKW*, reported an almost identical story in his memoirs. According to Keitel, by mid-summer 1940, Hitler began talking about the danger posed in the east by the Soviet threat. When asked by Keitel as to why he regarded Soviet intentions as so ominous, Hitler replied: "He had never lost sight of the inevitability of a clash between the world's two most diametrically opposed ideologies, and did not believe it could be avoided ... Besides, he believed there were indications that Russia was already girding herself for war with us."³⁴

With the guns barely cold from the clash of May 1940, Hitler ordered his generals to prepare for a campaign against the Soviet

BARBAROSSA: ITS ORIGINS AND SUCCESSES

Union. Field Marshal Keitel, who seldom opposed Hitler on anything, supposedly developed a factual memorandum on this campaign, citing the overextension of German forces due to the occupation of Western Europe.³⁵ Hitler, however, could not be dissuaded. Since the 1920s he had spoken of his plans to take the necessary steps for the destruction, once and for all, of the only Bolshevik state. Hence, after months of intensive preparation, on June 22, 1941, the German army launched the mightiest offensive in the annals of modern warfare – Operation Barbarossa.

Beginning in the early hours of June 22, 146 divisions, composed of a total of three million men, 600,000 vehicles, 750,000 horses, 3,580 armoured vehicles and 1,930 aircraft, assaulted the unprepared frontier army of the Soviet Union.³⁶ To bolster this massive commitment of men and materials, the Germans were soon joined by Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland. Rumania contributed 14 divisions and Finland committed 21.³⁷ During the course of the Russian campaign, volunteer contingents from Spanish and Italian army units supported the anti-Bolshevik campaign. Volunteer units were recruited from the occupied countries of France, Denmark, Belgium and Holland. In addition, detachments from the Baltic states were recruited to assist in destroying Bolshevism.

Opposing the German forces was an enormous Soviet force deployed along the western frontiers of the Soviet Union. Though they had not been alerted for the sudden German offensive, the Soviets had defensive forces stationed along the front amounting to 139 divisions and some 29 brigades, with a total defensive capability of 4,700,000 men. To bolster their defensive forces, the Soviet air force had 6,000 aircraft stationed in Belorussia alone.³⁸ To the people of that era, the magnitude of the two opposing forces clashing must have seemed like a glimpse of Armageddon.

The German army, which carried the brunt of the attack, was divided into three army groups: Army Group North, commanded by Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb; Army Group Centre, commanded by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock; and Army Group South, commanded by Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. The Panzer forces were kept decidedly separate from the infantry and were organized into four independent groups, all of which were commanded by aggressive and talented leaders. The same organizational formula which had brought the successes in the western campaigns of 1939 and 1940 was now applied on a much larger scale against the Soviet Union.

At first it seemed that the lessons learned and the experience gained in 1939 and 1940 were equally applicable to the vast expanses of Russia. At first light on June 22, 1941, the German offensive enjoyed the element of surprise over the defending Russian forces. Within a matter of hours, the German Luftwaffe had gained aerial supremacy over the Russians, inflicting casualties that are still staggering to the imagination.³⁹ German optimism was further boosted by the victories of the ground forces, which were equally impressive. For example, Panzer Group II, commanded by General Heinz Guderian, moved from its jumping-off place, at Brest Litovsk, to Borisov (a distance of 273 miles) in seven days. On one day alone, the Panzer group advanced 72 miles. By July 16, Guderian's army had advanced 413 miles to the city of Smolensk, despite the necessary delays for maintenance of the Panzers and the constant resistance of the Russian army.⁴⁰

The progress made by Army Group North was equally impressive. German forces aimed at Leningrad tore a hole in the Soviet defences on the first day of the campaign, and through this gap raced the 56th Panzer Corps commanded by General Eric von Manstein. By June 24 Manstein's Panzer Corps had driven the Russian defenders back a hundred miles, as far as the town of Wilkomierz; and, within a mere five days, German forces had halved the distance between their jumping-off point and the city of Leningrad.⁴¹ Only in the area of Army Group South did they encounter stiff defence on the part of the Russian army. This was due to the talents of Colonel General M.P. Kirponos, Commander of the Kiev Military District, and the fact that the German forces had substantial Hungarian and Rumanian divisions in tow. These allied units were supplied with French equipment and were not at all regarded as strong units – at least not by German standards.⁴²

The first three to four months of the Russian campaign saw an unending chain of victories for the German army. Not only were vast tracts of land taken, but, in addition, the German army seemed to be tearing the vitals out of the Russian army. For example, in the battles of Minsk and Bialystok alone, the German army took some 300,000 prisoners. In the last half of July 1941, German forces succeeded in completing the encirclement of Russian forces in Smolensk, again resulting in the capture of over 300,000 Russian prisoners. The culmination of these staggering victories came in the period from August 28 to September 26, 1941, when General Ewald von Kleist and General Guderian's Panzer Corps joined east of Kiev. After weeks of slaughter over 650,000 Russians were taken

prisoner, together with roughly 1,000 tanks and 3,000 transport vehicles.⁴³

If one surveys the Russian losses in the early stages of the war, they simply stagger the imagination. According to the German General Staff's figures, by November 1941, some 2,053,000 Russians had become prisoners of war. This figure continued to climb in the months that followed, and by March 1942 Alfred Rosenberg's *Ostministerium* claimed that the German army had taken 3,600,000 Russian prisoners since the beginning of the campaign.⁴⁴

And yet, within such staggering successes can also be found the roots of failure and defeat. This was certainly the case with German victories, since these depended on speed, the experience of well-equipped units and the ability of German forces to concentrate their maximum effort on a *Schwerpunkt* (the mailed fist of armour and firepower).⁴⁵ This was a key factor for the successful application of *Blitzkrieg*. Though the Germans advanced at an unprecedented pace through the first three months of the war, smashing Soviet armies at a rate which would have mortally wounded any other European power, in fact the further they penetrated the Soviet land mass, the less able they were to cripple the Soviet colossus.

The reason for this weakness in the German army was quite simple. When the Germans launched their offensive into Soviet territory on June 22, 1941, their forces and those of the allied armies were stretched across a front which reached from the Baltic Coast to the Rumanian frontier. This was a distance of roughly 1,500 miles. But, as the German armies moved eastward, their successes stretched the length of the battle-lines which became increasingly longer, causing logistical and transportation problems of nightmarish proportions. Consequently, in December 1941, when the German armies were at the gates of Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov, the front line had lengthened by 200–300 miles, in addition to being some 600 miles deep. The inadequacy of German troops in Russia is perhaps best shown by a comparison with the campaign against the Low Countries and France, where the Germans had assigned a total of 135 divisions to occupy some 50,000 square miles. For the Russian campaign, German planners committed 146 divisions which, by late 1941, were deployed over one million square miles.⁴⁶

Thus the crucial issue for the Russian campaign was mobilizing the manpower and equipment necessary to destroy the Russian army and to occupy the enormous land mass. The more successes

the Germans had, however, and the thinner their forces were spread, the more difficult it was to mobilize the forces for final victory. *Schwerpunkt* became increasingly difficult to achieve due to the enormous land mass of Russia. In fact the mailed fist of the German army, the Panzer Corps, became a lightly gloved hand stretching out its fingers in an increasingly vulnerable situation.

Due to the successes of the first weeks of the war, the German leadership was extremely slow to recognize the morass into which it was sinking at an alarming rate. General Franz Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff, wrote optimistically in his journal on July 3, 1941: "On the whole, then, it may be said that the objective to shatter the bulk of the Russian army this side of the Dvina and Dnieper has been accomplished ... It is thus probably no overstatement to say that the Russian campaign has been won in the space of two weeks."⁴⁷ It is even more indicative of the mood of Hitler's headquarters when Halder added:

As soon as the battle in the East changes from an effort to annihilate the enemy armed forces to one of paralyzing the enemy economy, our next tasks in the war against Britain will come to the foreground and will require penetration. Preparations must be made for the offensive against the land route between the Nile and Euphrates, both from Cyrenaica and through Antolia and perhaps, also, for an offensive from the Caucasus against Iran.⁴⁸

Apparently, few in Hitler's close circle considered it important to analyse the realities of the situation, at least in the early part of the eastern campaign. The fact remained that the German army consisted of 205 divisions on June 22, 1941. Of these, 145 divisions were waging war against Russia, 38 were stationed in France and the Low Countries, 12 divisions were tied down in Norway, seven were stationed in the Balkans, one division was in Denmark, and two were in Libya.⁴⁹ At the beginning of the Russian campaign, the German headquarters staff reckoned that there were about 200 Soviet divisions facing them.⁵⁰ With a total of 205 divisions, plus additional assistance from allied countries, German planners hoped to garrison Western Europe and the Balkans, wage a campaign against Soviet Russia, defeat Britain and its empire, and send forces through the Middle East and Iran.

In retrospect, it seems impossible that the Germans could have been so recklessly optimistic, but the victories of 1940-41 apparently clouded the minds of the General Staff officers. General

Hadler, despite the euphoria noted in his journal entry on July 3, 1941, began to have serious reservations. On the 51st day of the campaign, August 11, 1941, he wrote:

The whole situation makes it increasingly plain that we have underestimated the Russian Colossus who consistently prepared for war with that utterly ruthless determination so characteristic of totalitarian states ... At the outset of the war we have reckoned with about 200 enemy divisions. Now we have already counted 360. These divisions, indeed, are not armed and equipped according to our standards and their tactical leadership is often poor. But there they are and if we smash a dozen of them, the Russians simply put up another dozen. The time factor favors them as they near their own resources, while we are moving farther and farther away from ours.⁵¹

As the Germans were to learn belatedly, the Soviet mobilization machinery was extremely well-organized. Once the war started, the Soviet mobilization apparatus, aided by the National Military Organization, *Osoaviakhim*, put one million additional men into the field before July was out. As a result, even though the Germans would kill or capture some 7.5 million Russian soldiers before the beginning of winter, the Soviets continued to mobilize more. Any other European nation would have been mortally wounded and unable to recover.⁵²

While the Russians were mobilizing thousands – even millions of men – the Germans were virtually scraping the barrel. According to Field Marshal Keitel, the German armies' monthly casualty rate in day-to-day fighting, excluding major battles, averaged 150,000–160,000 men. Of this number, approximately 90,000–100,000 men could be replaced.⁵³ General Halder's diary, however, is far more illuminating on the issue. Halder, from the beginning of the campaign, meticulously noted the casualties of each army group. By September 15, 1941 Halder noted there had been 459,511 casualties, amounting to 13.5 per cent of the eastern army figured at an actual strength of 3.4 million men.⁵⁴ This slow but continual bleeding to death of the German army continued into the next year when, on June 25, 1942, Halder's diary indicated that total losses from June 22, 1941, to June 20, 1942, were 1,299,784 men, amounting to 40.62 per cent of the eastern army at an average strength of 3.2 million men.⁵⁵

The German army had planned to strike Soviet Russia with

maximum force, and within six to eight weeks destroy possible Soviet resistance. Due to the immense manpower and industrial capabilities of the Soviet Union, this plan failed miserably. Considering the drain on German manpower and the Soviet regenerative ability, the question remains as to how the Germans were able to continue this offensive for so long.

The solution to the manpower problem is not easily found in the official policy of the Nazi party and the overall intent of the Russian campaign, at least for Hitler and the majority of the party hacks, was the destruction of the Slavic State and the subordination of its people. The German army, however, had to pursue a more pragmatic and less doctrinaire policy. In short, the German army, desperate for manpower, began recruiting Russian civilians and prisoners of war to fill the ranks of their depleted forces.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

The iron rule must be and remains: it shall never be permitted for anyone else to bear arms other than Germans.

(Adolf Hitler, July 16, 1941)

Considering the deep-seated prejudices which Hitler held in respect of both the Slavic people and the Soviet Union, and the near crusading fervour of some National Socialists for the eastern campaign, it seems virtually unthinkable that Slavs – former Soviet citizens – should be recruited to support Hitler's campaign. In reality, however, Germany's military leaders had a limited number of options since their armies desperately needed reinforcements to fill the depleted ranks. Today it seems unlikely to many that the German army could show such independence and completely ignore National Socialist positions on the Slavs and the Soviet Union, but the precedent to do so was already there.

For example, as early as the planning phase of the Polish campaign, certain sections of the German armed forces began to utilize the assistance of Russian *émigré* groups. Finding former Russian citizens who were willing to fight against Poland and Russia was not all that difficult. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent peace settlements had brought substantial numbers of Ukrainians and Russian *émigrés* to many Western European countries. In the inter-war period, the Ukrainians in particular had become quite well-organized, creating the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. The O.U.N. was founded shortly after the First World War, and had ties with German intelligence as early as 1921. This tie with Germany was fostered by a Ukrainian nationalist named Colonel Eugene Konovalts, and was continued after 1938 by his successor, Colonel Andrew Mel'nyk (Konovalts was assassinated by a Soviet agent in 1938). The goal of his organization was a free and independent Ukraine.¹ Since the Germans had promoted a Ukrainian state detached from Russia in 1918, the O.U.N. sought a similar state in 1939.

An obvious target for Ukrainian ambitions in 1939 was Poland, which after the Treaty of Riga in 1921 included territory with a Ukrainian minority (East Galicia). With the German army posed for the destruction of Poland in the Spring of 1939, the *Abwehr*² contacted the O.U.N. for assistance. The *Abwehr* wanted to form, with O.U.N. support, a volunteer legion which would serve in a fifth-column capacity, disrupting Polish communications and promoting dissension behind the Polish lines. As a reward for their services, and in complete contradiction to the Nazi Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939, the *Abwehr* hinted at the possibility of an independent Galicia under German auspices.

The Ukrainian unit, the *Bergbauernhilfe* (or Mountain Peasant Volunteers) was not a large military organization, consisting as it did of some 500-1,000 men. However, according to Colonel Erwin Stolze, their German commander, they performed their tasks well, carrying out acts of sabotage behind the Polish lines.³ The promise of an independent Galicia proved to be only an enticement made by the *Abwehr*, and one which had no official support. As a result, with Poland's defeat, Germany and Russia took their respective shares of Poland, and the Ukrainians and their aspirations were conveniently forgotten. This German indifference was a disappointment to the Ukrainian nationalists, but the Russo-German victory over Poland in 1939 merely swelled their numbers by releasing more Ukrainian nationalists from Polish prisons. Among those released was Stephen Bandera, a militant Ukrainian nationalist who was not at all satisfied with the leadership of Andrew Mel'nyk. Consequently, he and the more aggressive Ukrainians broke away and established a splinter group of the O.U.N. As a result, by 1940 there were two major Ukrainian *émigré* organizations in Western Europe, both desiring an independent Ukraine and willing to use German assistance to obtain this goal.⁴

When German strategy called for the planning of the Russian campaign in late 1940, once again assistance was sought from Ukrainian and Russian *émigré* sources. Two special army regiments, *Nachtigall* and *Roland* were recruited from Ukrainian volunteers. *Nachtigall* was deployed near Lvov and in the early phases of the war participated in the advance toward Vinnitsa. *Roland* joined the attack from Rumania and proceeded with Army Group South toward Odessa. To further hamper Soviet defensive capabilities the German High Command ordered the *Abwehr* to instruct both Mel'nyk's and Bandera's organizations to promote demonstrations in the Soviet Ukraine to disrupt the rear areas of the Soviet army.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Another special regiment, *Brandenburg 800*, deserves recognition. It was recruited to work with Army Group North and engage in covert activities in the Baltic states. Working under the direction of Colonel Erwin Lahousen in *Abwehr II*, Soviet army uniforms, field equipment and weapons were collected. Separate detachments were then organized (mainly from non-German Baltic *émigrés*) to seize important military objectives such as bridges, tunnels and crossroads, until the main body of the German army arrived.⁵ This regiment was particularly effective in the early phases of the war. As Army Group North directed its attack toward Leningrad, the Key Bridge at Dvinsk was cleared by *Brandenburg 800* members dressed in Soviet uniforms and driving Soviet vehicles.⁶ The success of such units was entirely predictable, due to the element of surprise and the high motivation of the volunteers. Furthermore, the units were fighting for the dissolution of Stalin's government and hopefully, for a new Russia or an ethnic state for their individual nationality.

As a further bonus for German plans, when the German army advanced into Russia, in the Baltic states, the Ukraine, Bessarabia and Belorussia, they were regarded by many citizens as allies and liberators, rather than conquerors. For example, as the Fourth Light Division, a former Austrian Unit, moved into the Ukraine on June 30, 1941, William Prüller (a *Wehrmacht* infantryman) wrote in his diary:

The region has quite a lot of Ukrainians. In every village, we are showered with bouquets of flowers, even more beautiful ones than we got when we entered Vienna. Really! It's true. In front of some villages they have erected triumphal arches. Some have the following inscription in Russian and German: The Ukrainian peoples thank their liberators, the brave German Army. Heil Adolf Hitler!⁷

Even General Heinz Guderian, as he led the Panzer advance into Russia was surprised by the welcome given to German soldiers:

A significant indication of the attitude of the civilian population is provided by the fact that women came out from their village onto the very battlefield bringing wooden platters of bread and butter and eggs, and in my case at least refused to let me move on before I had eaten.⁸

A similar reception was given to the Germans by the people of the Baltic states. Dr Heinrich Haape, a physician with the German army as it marched from Memel through Lithuania, found large

numbers of Lithuanians lining the roads. Here and there, yellow and green flags waved in the wind. The people lining the roads threw cigarettes to German soldiers or handed them mugs of water and loaves of freshly baked bread. The people, according to Dr Haape, were convinced the Russians would never come back.⁹

Even today, many in the Western world find it inconceivable, considering Nazi atrocities, that any substantial number of "conquered" people could welcome the advance of the German army, but many Ukrainians, Cossacks, Tatars and Armenians still dreamed of autonomy or a state of their own, and naively thought the German invasion offered liberation. In particular, the inhabitants of the Baltic states wanted to regain their independence, only recently lost in 1940. According to Hans von Herwarth, a former member of the German diplomatic corps in Moscow, a high percentage of deserters who joined the Germans in an anti-Soviet movement were non-Russian nationalities. This was due to the substantial dissatisfaction within these nationalities with the Soviet system.¹⁰



1. The people of a small village in Galicia erected this arch to greet German troops. Despite all their good intentions the swastika on the flag is backwards.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE



2. Residents of the Galician village of Zakopane prepared an elaborate welcome for their German "liberators".



3. In Reval, Estonia, the populace greeted the Germans as liberators. Advancing soldiers in this 1941 photograph have been presented with flowers by the city's residents.

Of equal significance, a mere cursory review of Soviet history, particularly between 1917–41, indicates why the Soviet people would welcome anyone who might liberate them from the yoke of Stalinist oppression. Once Stalin began to intensify his control of the Communist Party apparatus in the late 1920s, a very strict regime based on terror began to operate in Soviet Russia. This regime began to show its utter contempt for human life with the collectivization movement of 1928–30. Not only did this cost millions of lives and the uprooting of other millions of people, but it contributed to the famine of 1932–33 when it is estimated that some five to ten million Soviet citizens died. This disaster was followed by an unrelated but staggering purge of the leadership group, which saw the liquidation of most of the Politburo members from the early 1920s – other than Stalin himself – who were still in leadership positions. During this purge of the political leadership the so-called Tukhachevski affair took place. This was a wholesale witch-hunt of the Soviet military, which further added to the enemies of the regime. By 1940 Stalinist terror was so widespread that virtually every family in the USSR had been directly affected by arbitrary arrests and the labour camps, or knew someone who had.¹¹

The extreme to which terror could be taken by the Soviet secret police (the NKVD) is well illustrated by the story of Soviet General Andrei Andreyevich Vlasov. Vlasov was in many respects a product of the Bolshevik revolution. He was the son of a peasant and, as a young man, was called up for military service in 1919. Due to his talents and abilities he rose up to company commander in one year and was the commanding officer of his regimental school within five years. In 1930 he joined the party, and during the 1930s was one of the most talented officers in the Leningrad military region. By 1941 his prominence was recognized when he received the order of Lenin.

He became a national, if not an international hero, due to his role in stopping German divisions outside Moscow in 1941. For his contribution to the defence of Moscow, he was awarded the order of the Red Banner and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general. Stalin personally recognized his talents and sent him to the Volkhov front (the Soviet position along the River Volkhov) in hopes of achieving a breakthrough to the besieged city of Leningrad. Vlasov reached his position on March 21, 1942, and attempted to push on towards Leningrad. While he was there, in the thick of a bitter and hard-fought battle, a letter came from his wife with the news, *Gosti byli* – guests were here! Though NKVD visits

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

were not uncommon in the 1930s and 1940s, this visit bothered Vlasov. Despite his impeccable and exemplary military career, and the fact he was a product of the revolution, the NKVD had come and searched his home. This was indeed a unique method for a country to honour a hero still fighting at the front. It is not surprising that Vlasov, after his capture, decided to work with the Germans to destroy Stalinism.¹²

Professor Roy Laird, author of *The Soviet Paradigm*,¹³ refers to terror as the "lynch-pin" of the Soviet system, particularly under Stalin. Testimonies from the survivors of the 1930s would bear out this theory, particularly the testimonies of the Soviets who worked for the Germans.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his book *The Gulag Archipelago*, has some perceptions on the issue of the eastern peoples who worked for the Germans. He asks the question:

What made them do it? ... What sort of people were they? For the most part people who had fallen themselves and their families under the caterpillar tracks of the twenties and thirties. People who had lost parents, relatives, loved ones in the turbid streams of our sewage system [i.e., the labour camps]. Or who themselves had time and again sunk and struggled to the surface in the camps and places of banishment ... People who in those cruel decades had found themselves severed, brutally cut off from the most precious thing on earth, the land itself – though it had been promised to them indirectly by the great decree of 1917 and though they had been called upon to shed their blood for it in the Civil War.¹⁴

The disenchanted, those who had somehow missed the benefits of the Bolshevik Revolution or who had been directly or indirectly affected by NKVD terror, were only one segment of the Soviet citizenry who worked with the Germans. Another major group of Soviet citizens who worked with the Germans consisted of Soviet soldiers who fell into German hands. Solzhenitsyn accurately stated in his *The Gulag Archipelago I-II*: "The only soldier in the world who cannot surrender is the soldier of the world's one and only Red army."¹⁵ Soviet military law clearly forbade the surrender of a Soviet soldier. To further complicate the plight of the Soviet soldier he correctly described him as abandoned since the Soviet Union did not sign the Geneva accords on the treatment of prisoners. Therefore, her soldiers were not protected by the Geneva guarantees and were, from the standpoint of this treaty, treated according

to their captor's whim. Hence, what recourse did a Soviet soldier have, if captured? Apparently none, as is illustrated by the case of Ivanov, a Leningrader who was the commander of a machine gun platoon in the Finnish War. He came home on crutches and was imprisoned in the Ustvymlag prison. His crime was being wounded and allowing himself to be captured.¹⁶ Or consider the testimony of a Soviet general staff officer interrogated by Captain Strik-Strikfeldt. The man was a graduate of several general staff courses but had become involved in the Tukhachevski affair and had been sent to a camp. When the war broke out, however, he was rehabilitated. He told Captain Strik-Strikfeldt that Stalin felt all Red Army personnel falling alive into enemy hands were traitors.¹⁷

Ultimately, as cited in Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago I*, the captured Soviet soldier had few alternatives. If he was captured and escaped, a successful escape resulted in a *SMERSH*¹⁸ interrogation and a sentence in prison. Furthermore, contact with Westerners, whether Germans or citizens of the occupied countries, made the Soviet citizen dangerous since he might acquire a free spirit in the West. If he survived a German prison camp, this raised the question of whether he had done so at the expense of his comrades. Finally, if he were put to work somewhere in Germany as a part of his captivity, that was regarded as collaboration.¹⁹

Consequently, as the German soldiers advanced they found a large number of Soviet people willing to welcome them. They also found that some of the Soviet soldiers facing them were willing to fight on the German side in order to bring about the destruction of the Stalinist system. The idea of sparking a massive, popular revolt of the Soviet peoples had occurred to some German officers, even before the German attack had been launched. In fact, the first duty of Captain Strik-Strikfeldt, as a newly commissioned captain on the staff of Field Marshal Fedor von Bock in June 1941, was to edit a leaflet intended for dispersal over Russian lines. The leaflet announced that the *Wehrmacht* was taking the offensive against the Red Army in order to free the peoples of Russia from Bolshevism. It called for the population and the Red Army, soldiers and civilians alike, to rise up and kill Communist Party members, Commissars and Komsomol members. While leaflets were printed and distributed throughout the Russian campaign, this was done mainly for its demoralizing effect; there was no serious expectation that it would promote a widespread revolt.²⁰ A few Germans were firmly convinced of the need to "liberate" Russia, but it should be emphasized that this concept was foreign to Hitler since he sought to

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

destroy Russia, not to liberate it. As he told his officers: "One thing has to be prevented, that anybody on our side gets the wrong ideas. We have to draw a clear distinction between the propaganda we broadcast to the other side and what we really propose to do."²¹

Nonetheless, "liberation" leaflets were distributed, and were to some extent effective. General Reinhard Gehlen, a key figure in the movement to change the German policies toward Russia, reported entire Soviet formations, up to regimental and divisional strength, laying down their arms and surrendering.²² These surrenders began in the early phases of the campaign.

The year 1941 was, however, not the time for open appeals for the liberation of Russia or the era for German planners to utilize significant numbers of Slavic soldiers in the campaign to destroy Bolshevism. Drunk as they were with the heady wine of success, the "men at the top" had no reason to change their plans for the Russian campaign. For the commanders at the front, however, situations were quite different since, as cited earlier, manpower shortages



4. This May 1943 photo, taken at an undisclosed location in the Occupied Zone of the Soviet Union shows eastern volunteers entering German service with the blessings of an Orthodox priest. The poster in the foreground proclaims "Hitler the Liberator".

became more real as each week of the campaign went by. Due to the desperate needs for replacements and the willingness of Soviet soldiers and civilians to work with the Germans, local commanders began on their own initiative to recruit various Soviet peoples to fill their depleted units as early as the autumn of 1941.

According to General Ernst Köstring, adviser of Russian military affairs to Army Group A and later *General der Osttruppen*, the earliest use of Russian auxiliaries occurred as German units with manpower shortages kept deserters and prisoners of war for use with German combat and service units. With widespread shortages in transport engineer and labour forces, the use of Russian auxiliaries increased throughout the year 1941. In addition, small units were organized by local commanders for combating partisans.²³

For example the German 6th Division, attached to the army group centre in 1941-42, was having difficulties with partisans and, as a result, detached the ninth company consisting of 160 men commanded by First Lieutenant Tietjen to fight the partisans. They were allowed to operate independently in the partisan-infested rear areas; gradually increasing numbers of Russian prisoners of war joined the unit which was known as "Tietjens group". The Russian volunteers commanded by the German cadre were formidable fighters in the thickly-wooded areas.²⁴

Major Heinz D. Herre, staff officer of the 49th German Mountain Corps, noting the enthusiastic reaction of Ukrainian townspeople to the arrival of the German liberators, on his own initiative asked one of the senior town citizens if he could supply a score of able-bodied citizens for guard duties at the German motorpool. Within an hour, over 50 Ukrainians arrived at German headquarters, ready for duty. Herre adopted the same tactic in every town for the remainder of the advance.²⁵

In the early phases, Russian POWs, deserters, and civilian volunteers were not usually given full combat status, but were used as vehicle drivers, ammunition carriers, cooks, interpreters, and rear echelon guards. In order to mask their true identity, these volunteers were called *Hilfswilligen* (perhaps best translated as voluntary helpers) or "*Hiwis*". The use of *Hiwis* proved so successful that, before the year 1941 was out, *Hiwi* units with full combatant status were being formed, though without sanction, official or unofficial, from the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*. Sometimes Russian combat units were organized into volunteer brigades and given special names like "Volga", "white command", or "Dnieper",

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

carefully omitting any suggestion in their titles that they were Russian volunteer units. More frequently, however, they were submerged into the main body of the German army and referred to as *Ostbataillon*, *Hiwis*, or *Osttruppen*.²⁶

It may never be known for certain how many *Hiwis* were recruited or fought with the Germans during the first year of the war. Since the movement was by and large clandestine, it is extremely difficult to assess the numbers of soldiers or number of units involved. General Gehlen, Chief of the Foreign Armies' East Section, estimated that by 1943 there were about 320,000 *Hiwis* serving with the German armed forces, many in combatant status. He maintained the Eighteenth German Army alone had 47,000 *Hiwis*.²⁷ General Köstring estimated them at 500,000–600,000 in the period 1942–43.²⁸ Whatever figure is correct, it is clear that the movement to utilize Russian volunteers continued to snowball throughout 1941–42.

Indicative of the possibilities available to the manpower-starved German units in 1941–42 were the opportunities presented to the Germans occupying the Smolensk region. Army Group Centre was at this time commanded by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock, an old-style Prussian officer, who in fact had blood ties with Russia through the Baltic German communities. Von Bock's staff by and large pursued an upright and honourable approach to their duties in the Russian campaign and in their dealings with the people in the occupied zones. The city fathers of Smolensk were extremely grateful for their liberation from Stalin's tyranny and desired to cooperate and assist in the war against Stalin. A group of the city leaders, with German advice, assumed the title of the "Russian Liberation Committee", and expressed its willingness to call the Russian people to arms and raise a Russian liberation army of one million men. They composed an address to the Führer of the German Reich which was illustrated by an artist and presented, together with one of Napoleon's cannons from the Smolensk Citadel, to Field Marshal von Bock for further presentation to Hitler. Weeks passed after the address was sent to the Führer's headquarters and there was no response. After repeated enquiries from Army Group Centre, the haughty reply came from Field Marshal von Keitel that "the address would remain unanswered as questions of policy were not the concern of the army group".²⁹ Thus did the High Command – which was watching the German army slowly bleed to death in the vast expanses of Russia – ignore a new and untapped source of manpower and a possible alternative approach to the problem of defeating Soviet Russia.

The issue of a massive mobilization of Russian volunteers was raised again in the autumn of 1941. The impetus came from von Bock's Army Group Centre, where Rudolph von Gersdorff pushed for official acceptance of Russian volunteers to fight alongside the German army. Von Bock's staff detailed Captain Strik-Strikfeldt to draft plans for the immediate enrolment of a Russian liberation army of 20,000 men to be trained and ready for service by April, 1942. The proposal was recommended by Field Marshal von Bock to the Commander in Chief, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. Von Brauchitsch commented: "I consider this of decisive importance for the issue of the war." The Führer's headquarters, however, did not acknowledge the plan or comment in any way,³⁰ and any influence that the two Field Marshals had would soon wane since both were later relieved from their posts.

Despite the unwillingness of the German High Command, or for that matter, the Führer, to permit widespread recruiting of Soviet volunteers, the use of *Hiwis* or legionnaires continued throughout 1941 and dramatically increased from 1942 through 1945. In short, the utilization of *Hiwis* for local army commands had to increase since the options to fill the huge gaps in the ranks of the German army were limited, and this was further complicated by Hitler's unwillingness to shorten his lines or adopt a defensive strategy. As more and more former Soviet citizens began to wear the field grey of the *Wehrmacht*, serious problems began to emerge between the victors and the vanquished.

As we have already seen, according to the official ideology of National Socialism, the Slavs were a subhuman species, incapable of intellectual development and unable to comprehend the ideas and the aspirations of Western philosophy and Western civilization. While these ideas were not universally accepted by all Germans, they did affect many, both within the armed forces and on the home front. As *Hiwis* appeared in the German ranks in increasing numbers, prejudices against Slavic peoples became increasingly evident. Many German soldiers disliked working with *Hiwis* on any type of equal footing. In addition, many German officers felt that it was a demotion to be assigned to command troops that they regarded as rabble.³¹

Such attitudes emerge from the diaries of Wilhelm Prüller, a German soldier. Prüller, who was actually an Austrian by birth, had served in the Austrian Hitler youth and the Austrian S.S. before he left his home to join the German S.S. The Russian campaign, however, found him in the German *Wehrmacht*, in an Infantry unit.

When Prüller's unit came upon a group of dead Soviet soldiers, his contempt for them was manifest: "Among the Russian dead, there are many Asiatic faces which are disgusting with their slit eyes. Dead women in uniform are lying around, too. These criminals stop at absolutely nothing."³² Prüller, and many soldiers like him, saw the "disgusting Asian faces", the peasant dwellings which "look more like dog huts" and a "dirty animal-like people", all of which reinforced their beliefs in the subhuman nature of the Slavic people.³³

Attitudes such as these were not peculiar to people like Prüller with their strong National Socialist backgrounds. The effect of National Socialist propaganda can also be seen in the orders of such high-ranking and respected officers as Field Marshal Eric von Manstein. In a communiqué dated November 20, 1941, von Manstein exhorted the German soldiers, telling them that:

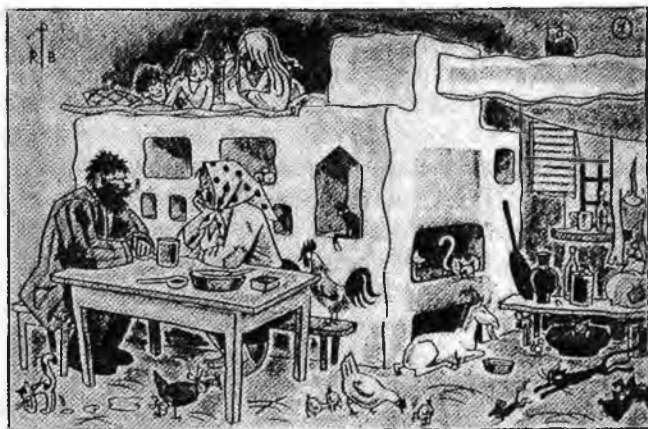
The German people are engaged in a life and death struggle against the Bolshevik system ... The Jewish Bolshevik system must be exterminated once and for all. Never again must it encroach upon our European living space ... The soldier must appreciate the necessity for harsh punishment of Jewry, the spiritual bearer of Bolshevik terror.³⁴

The matter was best summarized by *General der Osttruppen* Ernst Köstring. Köstring noted that even though Hitler declared the purpose of the eastern campaign to be the destruction of Bolshevism, the fact remained that it was also a campaign against the Soviet peoples. Propaganda ridiculing the intelligence and degree of civilization of the Soviet people continued in a constant campaign from 1941 to 1944.³⁵ Favoured by the propagandists were caricatures of the Mongolian and Asiatic types who were referred to as the "scum of the earth" and "Stalin's most devoted friends".³⁶ These concepts reached all levels of the German armed forces and, not surprisingly, had a negative effect on the movement to utilize former Soviet soldiers in the German *Wehrmacht*.

For example, Colonel Ralph von Heygendorf, who later commanded the 162nd Turk Infantry division, returned to Warsaw from the eastern front in September of 1942. As he got off the train at Warsaw station, he noticed a train on the siding which had a sign on it, "Poles, Jews and legionnaires last car". The sign and its message were decidedly ironic for Heygendorf, since he carried an order in his pocket appointing him "Commander of the Activation Staff of the Eastern Legions". Moreover, the supreme irony was that, while

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941–1945

An unassuming people – from the peasants' Soviet paradise



They live under one roof with the animals and live almost entirely on sunflower seeds.



5. National Socialist propaganda showing the backward nature of the Soviet Union (Adapted from *NS Frauen-Warte, die einzige Parteiamtliche Frauenzeitschrift*, Vol. X, January 11, 1943, p. 146)

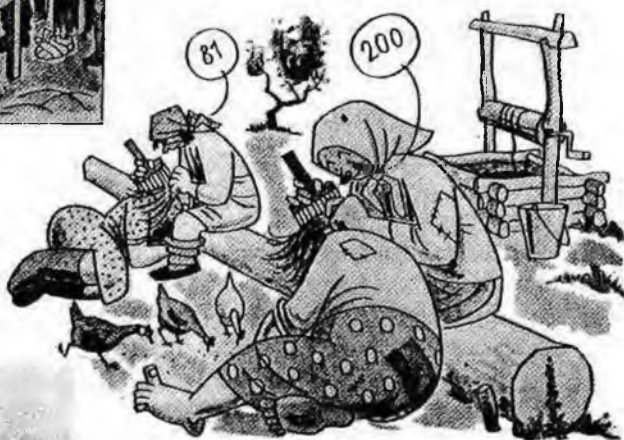
EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE



Generally speaking the habits of our everyday life are unknown to them.

6. National Socialist propaganda slowing the backward nature of the Soviet Union. (Adapted from *NS Frauen-Warte, die einzige Parteiämliche Frauenzeitschrift* Vol. X, January 11, 1943, p. 146)

For Sunday afternoon pleasure they engage in searches for their common malady, lice.



7. A favourite topic of National Socialist propaganda was the Asiatic of the Soviet Union. This German press photo shows one such Asiatic whose face is seriously scarred by smallpox. (Rohrer Collection)

Germany was becoming increasingly dependent on volunteer legions to replenish her depleted divisions, the legionnaires were relegated to the same cars as Jews. The status of Jews in German-occupied Europe is well-known in both popular and scholarly works.³⁷

To General Köstring all of this was symptomatic of a problem deeper than simply the effect of Nazi racist propaganda. In Köstring's opinion, it was an accepted fact that the German Army had excellent training. Conversely, even though the army's training was excellent, German personnel had few, if any, opportunities for advising or commanding any foreign peoples. Other nations, such as Britain and France with their large colonial empires, were very experienced in dealing with diverse peoples. The German army was fighting the effects of Nazi racist propaganda, while at the same time trying to educate its men to command peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds.³⁸

The problems caused by the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the Soviet people are another issue which merits closer examination. German soldiers were required to command or supervise Russians, Belorussians, Turkestanis, Estonians, Cossacks, Tatars, Georgians, Ukrainians, Kalmuks and a wide variety of other Soviet nationals. These people came from such diverse backgrounds and cultures that understanding their society and traditions was more than many German soldiers could accomplish. Consider the differences, for example, of supervising or commanding a Soviet volunteer from Smolensk as compared to a Kalmuk horseman whose entire life had been spent on the steppe. Commanding the Caucasian and Asiatic volunteers ultimately gave the Germans their most serious problems and revealed the worst prejudices toward Soviet people.

Major Hans Seraphim, who commanded Armenian, Turk and Volga Tatar units, detailed to some degree the problems in commanding Asiatic soldiers. Seraphim himself was a man with a sound educational background. He held a Ph.D degree and immediately after the war served as a lecturer in international law at the University of Göttingen. Seraphim found the Caucasian and Asiatic types to be capable soldiers and not at all inferior or so-called *Untermensch* types. Despite this evaluation, he noted "their lack of many outward marks of civilization" and stated that "anyone attempting to judge these volunteers by European moral standards would do them an injustice". Seraphim felt that they were prone to indulge in "oriental fantasy" which would permit them to call black

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

white and white black. The volunteers valued the virtues of truth and honesty only as long as it did not affect them adversely. They had a decided habit of taking things which did not belong to them, and when faced by the more friendly attitude of German women, they immediately "overstepped all bounds". According to Seraphim's assessment, they behaved respectably as long as they met with restraint. "If strongly emotional people are given an inch they will take a mile."³⁹ If there seems to be condescension in these comments, it stems from the unique problems inherent in utilizing these *Hiwis* who were from the least Europeanized section of the Soviet Union.

The prejudice exhibited by the Germans toward the volunteer legions was only one indicator of the problem. Another indicator cited by many writers is the treatment of Soviet soldiers who fell into German hands. While it is an acknowledged fact that somewhere between one and a half and three million Soviet soldiers perished in German prisoner-of-war camps, it is somewhat difficult to tie this tragedy totally to German ideology. For example, from the beginning of the Barbarossa Campaign, by Hitler's orders all political commissars attached to Soviet units were exempted from any guarantees as prisoners of war and were to be shot.⁴⁰ Though many German commanders refused to obey this order, in some areas it was in fact carried out.

In similar vein, General Hermann Reinecke, in charge of the O.K.W.'s prisoner of war section, issued the following order on September 8, 1941:

The Bolshevik soldier has therefore lost all claim to treatment as an honorable opponent in accordance with the Geneva convention ... The order for ruthlessness and energetic action must be given at the slightest indication of insubordination, especially in the case of Bolshevik fanatics. Insubordination, active or passive resistance, must be broken immediately by force of arms (bayonets, butts, and firearms) ... Anyone carrying out this order who does not use his weapon or does so with insufficient energy is punishable ...⁴¹

A graphic account of the results of such directives was given by Major Heinz D. Herre of the 49th German Mountain Corps. Herre, informed of horrible conditions at the Stalino transit camp for prisoners of war, drove to the camp for his own personal observations and was horrified by what he saw. The camp was located at a former Soviet college and, as he walked from classroom to

classroom, Herre observed a virtual hellhole of rooms filled with ghostly skeletal forms, corpses lying among the dying, and frozen human urine and faeces everywhere. A lieutenant from the camp staff asked Major Herre: “You really want to see this menagerie? It isn’t all that interesting to see the vermin dying. Sooner or later, they’ll croak. There’s nothing to be done about it.”⁴²

General Halder noted the problem in his diary after a November 14, 1941 visit to a camp located at Molodeczno: “Typhus camp of Russian POW’s (20,000), doomed to die. Several German doctors fatally ill. In other camps in the neighbourhood, not typhus, but every day, many prisoners die of starvation. Ghastly picture, but relief appears impractical at the moment.”⁴³

The temptation exists to lay the blame exclusively on the German, or more specifically National Socialist, attitude toward Slavs for the documented mistreatment of Soviet prisoners of war. In his study entitled *Keine Kamaraden*, Christian Streit blames the mistreatment of the Soviet prisoners of war on National Socialist ideology and its adherents who were pursuing a war of annihilation against Bolsheviks as well as Jews. Hitler clearly stated the



8. The logistics of the German army were unable to provide for the hundreds of thousands of Soviet prisoners taken in the battles of 1941–42. This photo taken in 1941–42 at a German camp called Senne-Krakenhof shows prisoners sleeping in hollowed-out places on the open ground. (Rohrer Collection)

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE



9. Soviet prisoners at Krakenhof, like most soldiers, learned to improvise. In this photo a hut constructed of tree branches gave shelter from the bitter cold of the European weather. (Rohrer Collection)



10. This group of prisoners, faced with the European winter constructed dugouts of branches and earth to survive, since the *Wehrmacht* could not provide shelter. (Rohrer Collection)



11. While the prisoners could improvise shelter they still lacked food. This prisoner at Lager Senne-Krakenhof bears mute testimony to the lack of supplies for prisoners of war. (Rohrer Collection)

philosophy for treating Soviet prisoners in a speech (March 30, 1941) to the *Wehrmacht*'s commanders: "We have to depart from the concept of comradeship. The Communist has never been a comrade and still is not a comrade. This is a war of extermination."⁴⁴

Even though a substantial amount of evidence exists to validate this school of thought, ideology and ideologists were probably not the determining factor in the treatment of prisoners during the eastern campaign's first year. As mentioned in the first chapter, the success of German arms in the first six months of the war stretched

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

the powerful *Wehrmacht* over a vast area, so vast that the forces available could barely carry out their military obligations. The one major obligation which was severely overextended was that of supplying the invasion force. By late 1941 the German army was deployed over an area of more than one million square miles. As the invading force advanced deeper into Soviet Russia, it advanced over an area that had been subjected to the "scorched earth" policy, depriving the invaders of local supply sources. Even worse, the Soviets removed or destroyed many of the transport facilities in the evacuated areas, thus depriving the German army of a means to transport foodstuffs into the occupied zone. Even where rail lines still existed, the necessity for gauge conversion made any existing lines virtually useless for immediate needs. Supply for the *Wehrmacht* became a virtual nightmare.⁴⁵

As one author has correctly noted, orders or directives do exist which, despite Reinecke's comments, called for an adequate provisioning of the Soviet prisoner of war. However, the attempt to supply an army of over three million men, assist in feeding the civilian population of the occupied zone and feed between two and three million Soviet prisoners of war — and all this with a shattered transportation system — was an impossibility. With German military successes continuing apace, and conquered Soviet territory becoming ever more vast, the supply system quickly became a shambles.

National Socialist ideology (regarding Slavic people) did result in many excesses toward Soviet prisoners of war and caused some Germans to ignore or rationalize the miserable state of many of their charges. It was not, however, ideology that was the major cause of the starvation of thousands of Soviet prisoners of war, but rather a logistical system which was totally inadequate for the task.

National Socialist ideology did significantly affect the attitudes of military personnel regarding Slavic people, whether as prisoners of war or volunteers of the German army. Fairness, however, dictates a discussion of another group whose attitude towards Slavic people was the antithesis of the party line.

WHO CAN WEAR THE FIELD GREY?

"I was always against putting them into our uniform. But who was for it? It was our beloved army which always has its own ideas."

(Adolf Hitler, January 27, 1945)

The official attitudes of National Socialism and the resulting policies having been discussed, we shall now turn our attention to a faction within the *Wehrmacht* which has been called by one author the "Other Germany Group". This was not an organized movement,¹ but rather a diverse group of men who believed in the necessity of changing the official German policy toward Slavic people and enlisting them in an anti-Bolshevik movement. The degree of fervency for this cause varied, as did the willingness to criticize directly the powers that were, from the *Wehrmacht* leadership to Hitler himself.²

In many respects, the hotbed of resistance to the methods being used for *Hiwis* and the Soviet people in general was the Foreign Armies East (*Fremde Heer Ost*) section of the *Wehrmacht* high command. This section was an intelligence service responsible to the *Wehrmacht* for evaluating the Russian forces along the entire eastern front.³ In early 1942, its commander was Lieutenant-Colonel Reinhard Gehlen. At the outset of the Russian Campaign, Gehlen, like so many *Wehrmacht* staff officers, was willing to follow Hitler's orders without question. After all, despite objections from his generals, Hitler's plans and projections had been correct, from the Rhineland reoccupation in 1936 through to the campaign in the West in 1940.

During the bitter winter of 1941-42, however, Gehlen began to question the methods used in the eastern campaign, and became convinced that Germany could not win the war solely by a military campaign against the Soviet Union.⁴ Gehlen recognized that

Hitler's strategy rejected the concept of utilizing the assistance of the Soviet people and discarded any logical plans to re-establish a Russian state after the war. The Russian campaign, in Hitler's eyes, was a campaign of destruction with no quarter being given and no compromise accepted. By the spring of 1942 Gehlen had come to believe that this strategy was quite simply impossible.⁵

In his post-war memoirs, Gehlen claims to have had discussions with General Halder and a number of other ranking staff officers during the winter of 1941–42. They apparently agreed that definite political goals had to be developed to permit utilization of volunteers and that there had to be a major alteration of German policies towards the Soviet people. Most active in these conversations, according to Gehlen, were General Adolf Heusinger, Chief of the *Wehrmacht* Operations Branch, General Edward Wagner, the Quartermaster General, General Franz Halder, Hitler's Chief of Staff, and of course, Colonel Gehlen himself. According to Gehlen, Halder agreed with these officers that a new direction had to be taken regarding the Soviet people. Furthermore, Halder acknowledged the necessity of convincing Hitler to modify his ideas and goals on the Soviet Union.⁶ All of these officers seemed to believe that Hitler, when presented with the factual situation on the eastern front, would listen to reason and choose the most logical route to German victory.⁷

An additional centre of resistance to official policies toward Slavs was Group III of the Foreign Armies East Command. This section was assigned to collect captured Soviet documents, orders and letters, and to evaluate the interrogations of the Soviet prisoners. Group III was commanded by Colonel Alexis von Roenne, a Baltic German (born in Courland) who had an excellent knowledge of Russian and a deep love for the Soviet people. Group III was composed of a diverse group of Germans with some type of Russian connection (including Baltic Germans), and who felt equally at ease with either Germans or Russians.⁸

One significant individual in Group III, and an active participant of the "Other Germany Group", was Captain Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt. Strik-Strikfeldt was a Baltic German who had served as a Tsarist officer during the First World War. He had begun his military service in the Second World War, on the intelligence staff of Field Marshal von Bock's Army Group Centre. Early in 1942, Strik-Strikfeldt was transferred into Group III and worked tirelessly with the members of von Roenne's staff to improve the German treatment of the Soviet people. Strik-Strikfeldt became well-known

within the Other Germany circle through a paper which he wrote, entitled "The Russian as a Human Being". This paper was widely distributed by Colonel Gehlen and the propaganda department of the O.K.W. On Gehlen's instructions, it was also given as a lecture in officer training courses by Strik-Strikfeldt.⁹

Another driving force in the "Other Germany Group" was Major Count Claus von Stauffenberg, head of Section II of the Organization Department of the O.K.W. This section was responsible for organizing the former Soviet soldiers who had volunteered to fight with the *Wehrmacht*. Von Stauffenberg was later to achieve fame due to his leading role in the July 20, 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. Through his position with the Organization Department, von Stauffenberg was in an excellent position to develop new policies relating to the eastern people. In many respects, he was probably the most outspoken critic of the inadequate German policies pursued on the eastern front.¹⁰ Von Stauffenberg took the lead in establishing a number of reforms to improve the status of the eastern volunteers. To begin with, he drew up universal regulations for all volunteers. Through these regulations a standard rate of pay was established, ration standards were set and some guidance was given on equipping volunteers.¹¹ Ultimately, in the spring of 1942, Regulation 8,000 was drafted by von Stauffenberg with the expressed intention of bringing the status of the former Soviets closer to that of their German peers.¹²

In addition to von Stauffenberg's achievements, in the winter of 1941-42 actual authority was sought from the *Wehrmacht* High Command to recruit auxiliary forces from the masses of Soviet P.O.W.s. As a result, in early 1942, an order was issued by the *Wehrmacht* High Command, permitting each German division to recruit, clothe, feed and arm some 3,000-4,000 volunteers.¹³ In fact, one of von Stauffenberg's associates in Section II indicates that a General Staff order was sent out informing all division commanders to have 15 per cent *Hiwis* in their Commands (roughly 2,550 men).¹⁴ These orders, however, did not permit unrestricted recruiting of eastern volunteers but limited the recruitment of units only to battalion size. This limitation was due to Hitler's fear of large volunteer formations turning on their German sponsors and destroying them.¹⁵

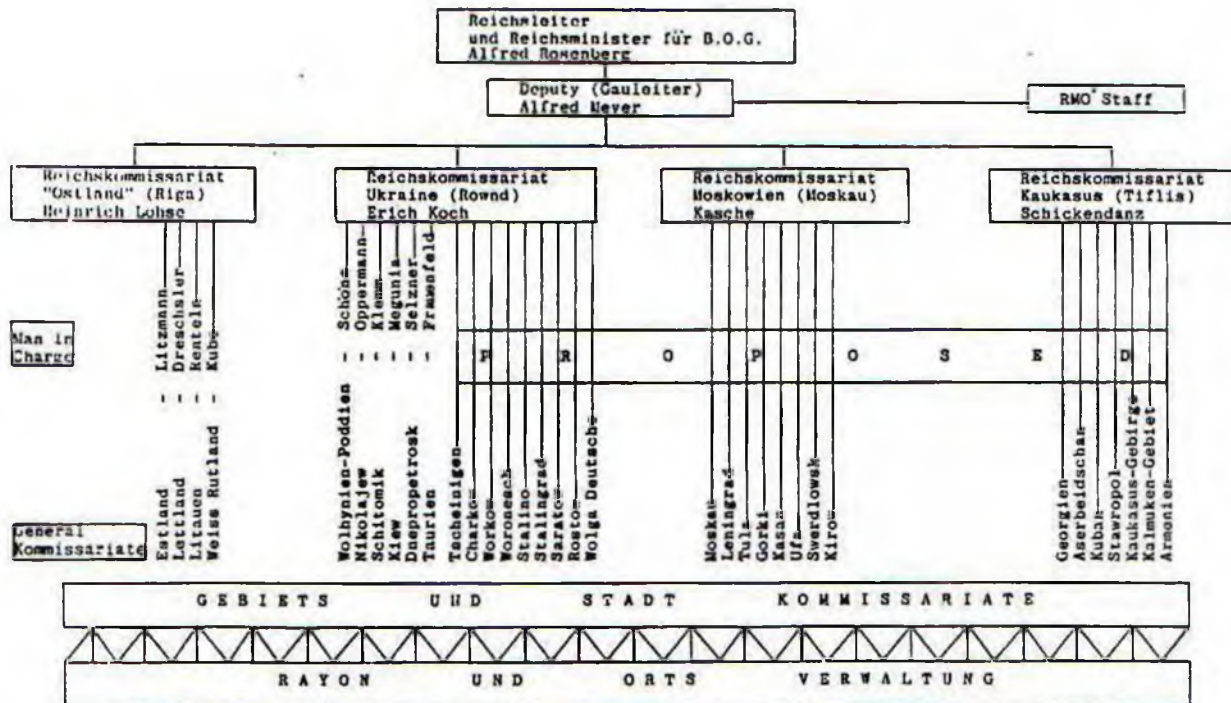
While improvement could be seen in the treatment of *Hiwis* by the German armed forces, there were many other forces that negated any progress made by reform elements. Several other German agencies had jurisdiction in the administration of eastern

peoples according to the official organizational scheme. The governing agency of former Soviet territory, once it had ceased to be part of the battle zone, was the *Ostministerium* or *Reichsministry* for Eastern Occupied Territories. The *Ostministerium* was under the leadership of the party ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, a man temperamentally more suited to pursuing his ideological fantasies rather than administering the *Ostministerium*. By nature, Rosenberg was not a politician and to complicate his situation he was forced to tolerate the existence, if not interference, of two other organizations within his political realm.

At the same time that he was appointed as head of the *Ostministerium*, Rosenberg was informed that Hermann Göring, as chief of Germany's four-year economic plan, would have full authority to work in the occupied territories and issue orders and edicts over which Rosenberg would have no control. In addition to Göring's organization, Heinrich Himmler's S.S. organization, which included the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei* or Secret State Police), was to have full authority in dealing with Bolshevik sub-humanity and the Jewish inhabitants of the Soviet Union. In essence, once the German military left an area to civilian administration, there were three independent authorities operating within the occupied zone.¹⁶

Although this problem sounds complex enough in itself, the organizational chart (see p. 48) shows a total of four projected *Reichskommissars*, only two of whom actually functioned due to the changing fortunes of war. Of the two that actually functioned, Rosenberg was only able to appoint one. Heinrich Löhse was his choice for the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*; but Eric Koch, *Reichskommissar* for the Ukraine, was forced on *Reichsminister* Rosenberg by Hitler. Consistent with his plans for the Ukraine, Hitler regarded this area as a zone for total exploitation by the German Reich. Considering this goal, he needed a hard driving man for the job, not one of Rosenberg's cronies who indulged in ideological fantasies and schemes for promoting various non-Russian nationalities. Hence, Hitler chose a solid party man, Eric Koch, as *Reichskommissar* for the Ukraine. Koch had a reputation for getting things done, even if he had to ride roughshod over everyone to accomplish his goals.¹⁷

Equally detrimental to the reform of the treatment of Slavic people was Heinrich Himmler's organization, the S.S. The misery and atrocities promoted by the S.S. within the occupied zone is a tragic story in itself. Himmler's philosophy was best summarized in



Source: Document of unknown origin (author's collection). A similar document is shown in Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, p.94.

GERMAN CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE OCCUPIED EAST

his speech, given to the S.S. major-generals at Posen (Poznań) on October 4, 1943. Himmler told them:

What happens to a Russian, to a Czech does not interest me in the slightest. What the nations can offer in the way of good blood type, we will take, if necessary to kidnapping their children and raising them here with us. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death [for starve Himmler used the verb *verrecken*, to die, as in the case of cattle] interests me only in so far as we need them for slaves for our Kultur; otherwise, it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch interests me only in so far as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished ... We Germans who are the only people in the world who have a decent attitude toward animals will also assume a decent attitude toward these human animals.¹⁸

Ultimately, this was the philosophy that many S.S. men used in their contacts with the Soviet people. Himmler's S.S. was responsible for systematically rounding up and slaughtering the Jews of Russia. The S.S. took the Nazi party philosophy toward Slavs seriously and frequently disposed of Soviet prisoners of war as well as initiating harsh and repressive measures against the civilian populace. Their attitudes and policies toward Soviet peoples were not moderated until the last year of the war, at which time it was too late to be of assistance to anyone.¹⁹

If the testimony of Hermann Rauschning, former president of the Danzig Senate, is accurate, *Reichskommissar* Eric Koch had a detailed plan to utilize the wealth of the Soviet Union. According to Rauschning, he visited with Koch in the mid-1930s, while the latter was Gauleiter of East Prussia. Koch had established a planning centre for eastern policy, headed by Professor von Grünberg. Von Grünberg's group had translated proposed concepts into a planned landscape of the future which showed roads and railways radiating from Germany and stretching as far east as the Black Sea and the Caucasus. The plans showed Germany and western Russia as a huge economic political bloc controlled by Germany.

When Rauschning discussed this plan of the future with Hitler, the latter commented, "Koch runs a little too far ahead of reality". However, he later said, "Only one can rule. If we want to rule, we must conquer Russia".²⁰

Again, Koch was appointed to govern the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine on Hitler's insistence and with Rosenberg's objections.

Once in this position, he administered the vast and agriculturally rich *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine as though it were an area intended solely for economic exploitation by the Greater German Reich. In 1941 he told the chief of Rosenberg's public relations section:

Let me tell you this, the Ukrainians are Slavs through and through. They're going to be governed by makhorka, vodka, and the knout. If you people want to spend your time theorizing about the slavic soul, that's alright with me. But I'll handle this job, my way.²¹

Koch regarded Rosenberg with contempt. He saw Hitler – and Hitler alone – as his direct superior. General Halder mentioned in his diary that as early as September 20, 1941, Gauleiter Koch was making his presence felt in the occupied zone. According to Halder, Koch criticized the inadequacy of the O.K.W., opposed Rosenberg, since the latter had failed to address the practicalities of occupation, and wanted some of Himmler's police forces for his administrative work.²² With an apparent direct line to Hitler and Göring, due to his ability to supply raw materials for Germany's war economy, Koch could criticize and ignore virtually everyone else operating in the Ukraine.

Rosenberg recognized his lack of authority over his subordinates, and on March 16, 1942, addressed a memorandum to the Führer acknowledging that the aims of German politics, particularly in the Ukraine, had been established through the Führer. They were:

exploitation and mobilization of raw materials, a German settlement in certain regions, no official education of the population toward intellectualism but the preservation of their labor strength, apart from that an unconcern with the interior affairs.²³

Rosenberg complained that certain individuals (Koch and his administrators) had drawn their own conclusions on this policy and were publicizing them everywhere with slogans like "colonials who should be whipped like niggers," "Slavs who should be kept as ignorant as possible," etc.²⁴ Rosenberg correctly stated that armed forces representatives were urging the administrative policies that would promote pacification of the people in the occupied territories. This pacification was impossible given Koch's administrative tactics and his tendency to broadcast his opinions and philosophies on Slavic people. In essence, Rosenberg was pleading with Hitler to help him control Koch and others like him. There is

no record that Hitler ever acknowledged the memorandum or took any kind of action on it. Again Rosenberg was not an effective administrator, nor could he set or enforce policies in the occupied territories. There were far too many Kochs and Himmlers in this sphere, a fact which resulted in a multitude of cases of brutality.

Any gains, therefore, in the humane treatment of the legionnaires, *Hiwis*, or the citizenry of the occupied zone during 1942 by the "Other Germany Group", were negated by the mistreatment or cruel administration of the Soviet peoples residing in the occupied areas. The legionnaires fought near the occupied zones, drew supplies from those areas, and many even had friends and relatives there. A legionnaire could not easily fight for the liberation of Russia from Bolshevism when *Reichskommissar* Koch was squeezing every resource from the Ukraine and promoting the knout, or while Himmler's squads were slaughtering Jews and Soviet P.O.W.s. The tyranny that many people hoped would leave with the retreat of Stalin's army merely became a new or a foreign tyranny. As Dr Heinrich Haape noted: "Instead, Rosenberg's columns, the brownshirts had followed the Army into Russia to become political masters. They came not to give freedom but to suppress and dominate. The Kolchoze system was retained except that the brown ones ran them instead of the red ones."²⁵

Before the Germans would seriously reconsider their official policies and methods in the Soviet Union, however, it was necessary for the situation on the eastern front to become far more critical. In fact it was not until the spectre of retreat and defeat loomed before them that they countenanced any change in their policies.

The crisis that was to shake the German political and military structure began with the offensive of 1942. From late 1941 through the spring of 1942, the German army was locked in near static warfare by an increasingly powerful enemy and an unusually severe winter. With the coming of spring, however, the German army again began planning a major offensive. While preparations for the 1942 offensive were under way, the *Wehrmacht* was obliged to fend off a major offensive led by Soviet Marshal S.K. Timoshenko, who launched his own attack toward Krasnograd on May 12. The Soviet offensive was finally contained when the Panzer forces of Field Marshal Paul von Kleist and General Friedrich Paulus completed the encirclement of the Soviet force on May 23, 1942. Once the Soviet forces were halted, with heavy casualties, preparations for the 1942 German offensive were resumed.

The full fury of the German armoured offensive struck the Soviet

positions on June 28, 1942, shattering the southern Soviet defences. Three full German armies – the Second Army commanded by General Freiherr Maximilian von Weichs, the Fourth Panzer Army commanded by General Hermann Hoth and the unusually strong 6th Army commanded by General Paulus – surged forward over the steppe region which stretched eastward to the Volga. For a brief period it was uncertain which German army would be first to reach the Volga and its key southern city, Stalingrad. The fortunes of war, however, put Paulus in a position where his army was the most logical striking force. Therefore, on August 19, 1942 the Sixth Army initiated its first attack, which would ultimately lead to the bitter street-fighting in Stalingrad.

Originally Stalingrad was to be a mere stepping-stone for the German army as it planned to swing north of Stalingrad and focus its attack on the hub of the Soviet government, Moscow. The capture of Stalingrad only became the centre of world attention when a pitched battle took place around and in the city, with neither side giving quarter but rather pouring thousands of reinforcements into the raging battle.²⁶ The battle of Stalingrad caused the Sixth Army, one of Hitler's best mobile striking forces, to become bogged down in house-to-house, street-by-street fighting. While distances for modern armies are normally measured by miles, the Sixth Army measured its progress by city blocks. With casualties mounting daily, the Sixth Army inched its way into Stalingrad, losing the momentum so important for a modern attacking force. The bitter street-to-street fighting continued for three months with the Germans trying unsuccessfully to dislodge the last Soviet defenders. By committing the Sixth Army to the battle for Stalingrad, the German army both extended itself far to the east and tied itself to the Stalingrad vicinity for a good four months, permitting the Soviet planners to concentrate their counter-offensive in this one small area.

The long salient of the German army, which stretched toward Stalingrad and the banks of the Volga, had its flanks protected by satellite or allied armies, composed largely of Rumanian troops. Recognizing the weak flanks, the Soviet Army prepared its counter-attack extremely well. On November 19, 1942, the Soviet forces struck the soft flanks of the Sixth Army, covered by the 3rd Rumanian Army in the north and the 4th Rumanian Army to the south. The fury of the Soviet assault quickly shattered the Rumanian divisions and permitted a link-up of the two Soviet Pincers on November 23, 1942. Consequently, the Sixth Army, a

force of roughly a quarter of a million men, complete with all of its supplies and equipment, was entombed behind Soviet lines.

During the winter of 1941–42, several major German military units had been surrounded on the eastern front but had always managed to hold out against Soviet attacks and link up again with the main German force in the spring.²⁷ The Sixth Army, however, was a prize that the Soviets wanted and it would remain encircled to perish in Stalingrad, a city for which it had bled itself white. The Sixth Army fought from November 23 until February 1, when finally the once-proud force surrendered. Some quarter of a million men were killed or captured, and in addition all the field equipment and supplies were lost. In her attempt to provision the dying Sixth Army the *Luftwaffe* sustained heavy losses in men and aircraft. With the demise of the Sixth Army, a huge gap appeared in the southern German positions. Due to the already heavy loss of manpower, it was a gap which would prove extremely difficult to fill.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, German losses in the Russian campaign, between June 22, 1941 and July 22, 1942, had reached the figure of 1,299,784 men.²⁸ Granted, Germany had bolstered her forces during this time-span and her allies, particularly the Rumanians and Hungarians, had added substantially to their forces during the hard winter of 1941–42. Nonetheless, Germany's crack divisions, her veteran units, were slowly being depleted. The offensive of 1941 and the blunting of the December 1941 Soviet counter-attack had caused heavy casualties, losses that were increasingly difficult to replace. Somewhere manpower had to be found if Germany was to continue her campaign on the eastern front. Considering the widespread commitments by the Germans in Europe and the Mediterranean, they were hard pressed to supply the men necessary for their military operations.

To officers like Colonel Reinhard Gehlen or Claus von Stauffenberg the answer to Germany's increasing manpower needs was the utilization of volunteers from the eastern peoples. In spite of all attempts to liberalize the German policies in the east, Hitler and the hard-line National Socialists refused to alter their ideas toward the eastern campaign or the eastern peoples. The ideological concepts underpinning *Barbarossa* were simply too strong. Therefore, the recruitment of Slavic people had to remain clandestine or was at best grudgingly accepted. Perhaps General Ernst Köstring's comments on the basic goals for Hitler's eastern campaign, as cited earlier, explain most clearly why reform was unlikely. Köstring believed the eastern campaign was being waged against both the

Soviet Union as a political entity and the Soviet people.²⁹ Political accommodation with either simply wasn't feasible. Such a hard line robbed the campaign in the east of one major element which could have changed the whole situation for the German army: the ability to seek victory in the east *both* by political and military means.

According to General Reinhard Gehlen, during the planning phases of the Russian campaign, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, Commander and Chief of the Army, and his Chief of Staff expressed reservations to Hitler about launching a campaign with limitless objectives against the Soviet Union. Logistical problems alone made this a questionable strategy. Yet Hitler and his close advisers persisted and developed the campaign solely to destroy the Soviet Union, and destroy it so completely that it could never again rise to contest the new power in Europe, the greater German Reich. With this goal in mind, all German planning was based on a series of lightning swift advances designed to destroy the Soviet army and permit the German army to advance and occupy the USSR up to the Urals. With this proposed strategy, it was assumed that a full military victory would be achieved. The future and composition of the Slavic "rump" state east of the Urals was never seriously discussed. The objective of the campaign had been clearly outlined in *Mein Kampf* years ago: to destroy once and for all the Bolshevik menace and to gain *Lebensraum* (room to live) in the east for the German people.³⁰ Hitler never permitted any major deviation from this goal.

But, as the campaign developed, it became obvious that Germany should seek to develop at least in part a political solution, given limitations of German resources and the friendly response accorded the German army as it advanced into the Soviet Union. Hitler, however, was totally opposed to any political settlement which solicited the help of the Soviet people or considered self-government for the newly "liberated" sections of the Soviet Union. In addition, he expressed his views repeatedly on the follies of using foreign legionnaires, especially those from Slavic races. Since the supply of manpower drawn from either dissident Soviet peoples or from former Soviet soldiers seemed to offer so much promise for the depleted German army, Hitler's hard line toward Soviet soldiers in field grey should perhaps be examined more closely.

Hitler's opposition to foreign troops within the *Wehrmacht* stemmed from both ideological and historical reasons. His perceptions were formed not only by his anti-Slav beliefs but by his observations of national legions in the Austro-Hungarian and

German armies in the First World War. In several private conversations, he referred to the utilization of Polish and Czech legions during the First World War. For example, in a discussion recorded on April 5, 1942, he stated:

In any case, we must not commit the mistake of enlisting in the German army foreigners who seem to us to be worthwhile fellows unless they can prove that they're utterly steeped in the idea of the German Reich. While we're on the subject, I'm sceptical about the participation of all these foreign legions, in our struggle on the eastern front. We must not forget that unless he is convinced of his racial membership of the German Reich, the foreign legionary is bound to feel that he's betraying his country. The fall of Hapsburg Monarchy clearly shows the full size of this danger. On that occasion, too, it was thought that the other peoples could be won over Poles, Czechs, etc. – by giving them a military formation in the Austrian army. Yet at the decisive moment, it became obvious that these men were the standard bearers of the revolution.³¹

Again, at a military conference in 1943, attended by Field Marshal Keitel and General Kurt Zeitzler, Chief of the General Staff, Hitler used the Poles as an example of legionnaires who at first seemed harmless until the situation reversed itself. At this conference, Hitler insinuated that General Erich von Ludendorff's support of a Polish legion during the First World War caused him in many respects to be regarded as the founder of the Polish State.³² Clearly Hitler regarded the foundation of foreign legions within the *Wehrmacht* as dangerous, since he believed that such policies in the past had led to the beginnings of a national consciousness. Thus emerges one of Hitler's major objections to volunteer legions: he was certain they were unreliable. In his opinion, when Germany needed them most, they would fail. This was the basis of the *Wehrmacht* policy, dating from 1942, which forbade the establishment of units over battalion strength.³³ Within high command circles, it was felt that eastern legions of battalion strength (or less) could be controlled, or disarmed if they became unreliable. Conversely, division or corps strength units could be unmanageable under such situations. Hence, when Army Group Centre proposed to develop a liberation army with the assistance of the Smolensk city leaders, this was rejected, Hitler and the High Command fearing the potential problem of controlling this proposed army of one

million men should they decide to develop their own political ideals or their own goals.³⁴

Hitler's resistance to the use of volunteers was based on something far deeper than simple mistrust. He was totally opposed to the use of volunteers, mainly because of his philosophical and ideological convictions. In a file memorandum dated July 16, 1941, Hitler engaged in a discussion with *Reichsminister* Rosenberg, Field Marshal Keitel and *Reichsmarshal* Göring. Hitler gave the group a brief résumé of his plans for the area west of Urals; following this he stated plainly:

Every follower of the Führer must know that the security of the Reich is only possible if no foreign military power exists west of the Urals; the defense of this space for all eventual dangers is a German responsibility. The iron rule must be and remains: *It shall never be permitted for anyone else to bear arms other than Germans.* This is particularly important to remember when it seems easier to cultivate the subdued population as arms bearers. This is wrong ... Only the German may bear arms, not the Slav, not the Czech, not the Cossack or the Ukrainian.³⁵

Such a statement would seem to indicate Hitler's feelings on the use of legionnaires so clearly that the matter would simply not be open for further discussion. But this is not necessarily the case, since Hitler's ideas on a subject were not always translated into National Socialist policy. On many occasions he permitted wide deviations from his own beliefs for reasons that may never be entirely understood.³⁶ Furthermore, there was some flexibility on the issue, since Hitler's attitude to Soviet nationalities was not entirely consistent and would permit him in some cases to alter his policies on arms-bearing for Germany. This equivocation resulted in a stark contrast between his pronouncements and his policies.

For example, in the southern sections of the Soviet Union there were substantial Moslem minorities. Between 1941-44, Hitler mentioned, on a number of occasions, his admiration for the Moslem religion and its followers, and a similar admiration for the Japanese Shinto faith. Christianity, in his opinion, encouraged the wrong traits in its believers, including being meek and humble in spirit. Religions like Shintoism and Islam, however, promoted an aggressive warrior-like spirit. In Hitler's words:

It rather looks as if the real god takes no notice of the prayers offered night and day by the British and the Americans, but

reserves his mercies for the heroes of Japan. It is not surprising that this should be so for the religion of the Japanese is above all a cult of heroism, and its heroes are those who do not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the glory and safety of their country. The Christians, on the other hand, prefer to honor the saints ...³⁷

In keeping with the admiration Hitler expressed on many occasions for the Moslems, it is significant to note that the High Command recognized the Turkestanian tribes of southern Russia as one of the first ethnic groups to be officially worthy to wear the field grey of the *Wehrmacht*. These people were a far cry from the so-called Aryans of northern Europe — a tribe so often idealized by the National Socialist ideologists. Nevertheless, Hitler was prepared to accept them into the German army, because of his belief in the powers of the Moslem faith to build a strong warrior-like people.

Hitler affirmed his belief in the Moslems on a number of occasions during the course of the war. At a military conference in 1943, the issue of volunteer legions was again discussed. The case in point was the Georgian battalion, a unit whose reliability was at best questionable. Hitler stated his opinion very clearly, questioning the advisability of using Georgians since they were *not Moslem* and were not of the Turkic race. Since Stalin was a Georgian, Hitler thought the Georgians might still be flirting with Communism. In his opinion, the Armenian battalion was also "unreliable and dangerous". He concluded the discussion by stating: "The only people that I think are reliable are the real Mohammedans, i.e., the real Turkoman peoples."³⁸

Though Hitler had severe reservations about recruiting some of the above-mentioned Soviet nationalities, this did not mean he was willing to forbid their existence in the *Wehrmacht*. This can be seen in an official *Wehrmacht* directive dated December 17, 1941, when the *Oberkommando des Heeres* ordered the creation of:

- (1) a "Turkestan Legion", consisting of members of the following peoples: Turkestanis, Uzbecks, Kasachs, Kirghiz, Karakul-paks and Tatshiks;
- (2) a "Caucasian Mohammedan Legion", consisting of members of the following peoples: Azerbaidjanis, Daghestanis, Ingushens, Lesghians and Tschetchens;
- (3) a "Georgian Legion";
- (4) an "Armenian Legion".

An addendum to this order acknowledged that Soviet prisoners of war belonging to various ethnic groups had been used as auxiliary forces with duties including truck drivers, errand boys and, in a few cases (such as the Cossacks), for actual fighting against partisans. The High Command did not criticize this action even though such actions were strictly against policy.³⁹ As of December 17, 1941, the recruiting of eastern peoples for the *Wehrmacht*, at least in a limited fashion, was authorized. Official authorization, however, was for specified nationalities and any other groups were grudgingly accepted or officially ignored.

The authorized legions functioned and expanded throughout 1942 with official approval. The unique recognition of specified nationalities was strengthened and expanded in August 1942 with the publication of Regulation 8000, in pamphlet form, for distribution to German troops. This pamphlet classified Soviet citizens into six separate categories and specified their authorized use. According to this pamphlet:

(a) Members of the Turkic race and the Cossacks are equally authorized as fellow soldiers to fight side by side with German soldiers against the Bolshevik enemy. The following nationalities belong to this category:

1. Turkic Battalions
2. Cossack Squadrons
3. Crimean Tatars.

(b) Indigenous security units of volunteers, for example former prisoners of war, were permitted to fight for the security of their homeland to protect against intrusions by the Russian Army and against bandits and Bolshevik agitators. These units were composed of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns, White Russians, Ukrainians and *Volks Deutsche*.

(c) Police units composed of indigenous volunteers such as former Soviet prisoners of war may be utilized as uniformed military police.

(d) Volunteer citizens and former prisoners who work with the German troops as helpers (and apparently were not organized into identifiable units).

(e) Ordinary Soviet citizens who assist the German armed forces by working on streets, building fortifications and strengthening communication wire.

(f) Soviet prisoners of war who work for German units, similar to (c).

According to this pamphlet, only Cossacks, Turkic peoples and Crimean Tatars were allowed to fight side by side, as equals with Germans.⁴⁰ While it seems unique that these three groups were ranked above the inhabitants of the Baltic States (which had sizable German minorities), this policy was in keeping with Hitler's beliefs.

The High Command's recognition of both their legitimacy and the different problems posed by their existence resulted in the organization section of the *Oberkommando des Heeres* creating the office *General der Ostruppen*. This General and his staff were responsible for the mobilization, training and welfare of the authorized eastern units.⁴¹ The first officer in charge of this section was General Heinz Hellmich. General Hellmich was formerly commander of the 23rd division at the time when it was involved in the attack on Moscow. Hellmich had been relieved of that command due to supposed failures in command, whether real or imagined. Hellmich, however, had excellent qualifications for the position of *General der Ostruppen*. While on the eastern front during the First World War, he was captured by the Russians and spent some time as a prisoner of war. Whilst a prisoner, he had learned to speak Russian fairly well and had gained some appreciation of the Russian people. His insights were, though, to some extent negated by his militaristic mentality and inability to grasp complex political ideas.⁴²

The creation of an office for recruiting and training eastern volunteers occurred without any major objections on Hitler's part, despite his reservations on the use of volunteer legions. The sentiments expressed by the Führer regarding the use of certain ethnic groups within the Soviet Union as volunteers was also echoed by some of the top military leadership. Field Marshal von Manstein, for example, in a command memorandum dated November 20, 1941, was harsh toward the Soviet peoples and the Jews who supposedly supported the Jewish Bolshevik state. However, he noted:

It is to be expected that non-Bolshevist Ukrainians, Russians and Tartars will be converted to the new order. The non-participation of numerous alleged anti-Soviet elements must give place to a definite decision in favor of active co-operation against Bolshevism.⁴³

The topic of volunteer units, particularly those from the Caspian-Black Sea region, was again raised in a military conference at Berghof near Berchtesgaden in Bavaria on June 8, 1943. This conference was a high-level meeting and was attended by Field

Marshal Keitel, General Kurt Zeitzler (Chief of the General Staff) and, of course, Hitler himself. In the course of the discussion, Hitler stated: "I would say, that once we were successfully in the Caucasus, we could surely get units, not from the Georgians, but from the small Turkic peoples." Field Marshal Keitel quickly agreed, commenting: "We accept those because they are the strongest opponents of bolshevism. These Turkic legions which are the only national detachments that stand outside the discussion."⁴⁴

In some respects, progress towards legitimizing the eastern volunteers and utilizing them to replenish the German army was apparent in 1942 and early 1943. The status of the volunteers continued to improve somewhat throughout this period. But even as there seemed to be considerable progress in mid-1943 the movement almost received a death blow. In the spring of 1943 Hitler had planned a summer offensive against the Soviet army. With this offensive, he sought again to roll back the Soviet army and redress the imbalance brought about by the Stalingrad catastrophe. The planned offensive had the objective of crasing the Kursk salient which jutted out into the German lines between Orel and Krarkov. The offensive was originally scheduled for March or April of 1943, but changes in plans and endless bickering over strategy and whether an offensive should even be launched, delayed it until July 3, 1943. But this time, the Russians had watched a German military build-up for several months and any possibility of surprise was lost.⁴⁵

The attack was eventually launched on July 3, 1943, and though the German pinchers at first advanced, it was into a fierce defence, which quickly began to destroy the effectiveness of the attack. The fighting in the Kursk-Orel-Kharkov vicinity continued throughout July, but it quickly became obvious that encirclement of the Soviet forces in the Kursk salient could not be achieved. Instead, a costly pitched battle developed, a battle of men and material that could only benefit the Soviets.

The failure of the Kursk offensive, often called the greatest tank battle in history, and the subsequent Soviet advances infuriated Hitler. As Army Group Centre was beginning to lose ground, a conference was held at Hitler's headquarters near Rastenberg, East Prussia, on September 14, 1943. As the deteriorating military position was discussed, Heinrich Himmler announced:

My Führer, I have just learned that the Russian successes against the southern army of Army Group Center are due to treachery by Russian volunteers who were committed there

contrary to the ban on their use at the front. I was always against putting Russians into German uniforms and giving them weapons. Here you have the consequences of the madness of certain army circles.⁴⁶

According to all reports, Hitler was totally incensed by the thought that Russians in German uniform could have robbed him of military success. After confirming with Field Marshal Keitel the unreliability of some eastern legions, Hitler reacted swiftly to what he perceived as a danger to German security. He ordered his Chief of Staff, General Zeitzler, to develop a plan to disarm the volunteers. Hitler planned to disarm the approximately 800,000 volunteers and send them into the mines and industries of occupied Europe.

Though a plan was developed, it was never carried out. Horrified by the prospect of such a policy, Colonel Heinz Herre and General Hellmich approached General Zeitzler and convinced him with the latest figures that the volunteer legions were quite reliable and had an extremely low desertion rate. Through the efforts of Colonel Herre and many German commanders who could not tolerate the staggering loss of manpower the disarmament of the eastern legions would require, a compromise was finally reached. The eastern volunteers would be sent westward to man the Atlantic coastal fortifications and to take up positions all over German-occupied Europe. By this action, the legionnaires would be geographically separated from their homeland and would have little opportunity to desert to their former comrades. Through this policy some 70-80 per cent of the eastern legions were to be sent to western Europe. The decision came in October of 1943 and, within the next six months, a substantial number of the eastern volunteers were transferred to France, Denmark, Italy and even the Channel Islands.⁴⁷ The transfer of eastern volunteers to the west even included the Moslem and Turkic volunteers, peoples which, as we have already noted, Hitler held in high regard.

Even while this transfer was taking place, and when seemingly the idea of using eastern legionnaires was officially in disfavour, a stark contradiction to Hitler's September 1943 directives was occurring. Beginning in the spring of 1943, Cossacks from all over the eastern front were called together in central collecting points and sent to Mielau (Mlawa), Poland, for training as a Cossack division. The training was not a brief orientation but full training as a first-line division complete with German cadre. This division was ordered to

the Yugoslav front in September of 1943, where it engaged Tito's partisans. Due to its exceptional performance, the division was highly regarded by the Germans and before the war was over it was enlarged to a full Cossack Cavalry Corps. Again, the question emerges, why was this eastern national group recognized as being worthy to train, and fight, and noticeably enlarged in number, when by and large the eastern legions were in disfavour with the High Command?

There seems to be no logical answer to this question or the obvious contradiction in German policy. Hitler, in the memorandum dated earlier from July 17, 1941 had clearly stated that no one could bear arms in the struggle in the east but the German. He specifically stated prohibitions against Slavs, Czechs, Cossacks and Ukrainians bearing arms.⁴⁸ This policy, however, was violated by commanders from the very beginning of the eastern campaign. Furthermore, Hitler recognized and ignored violations of this policy from the inception of the campaign and even contradicted himself on a number of occasions by supporting Moslem units.

Another group to find favour were the Cossacks, who possessed traits similar to the Turkic-Moslem tribes, since they had a reputation of being a fierce war-like people and, in addition, had fiercely resisted the Bolshevik coup in 1917-18. As counter-revolutionaries the Cossacks had a good reputation in certain German circles, a factor which assuredly helped them when the Germans advanced into their region. The Cossacks and their resistance to the Bolsheviks had been very adequately detailed by the activities of certain *émigrés*, especially Peter Krasnov.⁴⁹ This seemed to set them apart from the Great Russians in the eyes of many German policy-makers.

Evidence shows that there was official recognition of the Cossacks fighting with the Germans as early as December 17, 1941.⁵⁰ Some have claimed that Hitler personally authorized their recruitment as early as October 22, 1941 or perhaps on April 15, 1942.⁵¹ To date, the exact orders authorizing this recruitment have not been found. This should not be regarded as unusual, in that many documents pertaining to volunteers are simply missing.⁵² Nonetheless, Hitler seemed to alter his opinion sometime during the first year of the war concerning the use of Cossacks in the German armed forces. By the end of the war, he was full of praise for the Cossacks.

In a number of fragmentary records from the January 27, 1945 military situation conference, comments were made on the Cossack

legions. Hitler started the dialogue by denouncing the various legions which were wearing German uniforms. He said:

I was always against putting them into our uniform. But who was for it? It was our beloved army which always has its own ideas ... I was always against putting the Cossacks into German uniform. They ought to have been given Cossack uniform and Cossack badges of rank to show that they were fighting for us. Much more romantic, it never occurs to the Englishmen to dress up an Indian as an Englishman. We're the only people who've got no shame because we've got no character. Otherwise, one wouldn't go peddling German tin hats to other people.⁵³

As the conversation continued, General Jodl gave a situation report on the fighting in Yugoslavia and mentioned in passing the fine performance of the Cossacks who were fighting in that region. The Führer quickly commented:

Führer: The Cossacks are good. But why must they wear German uniforms? Why not have the beautiful Cossack uniforms?

Jodl: Most of them have Cossack uniforms.

Guderian: Red fur caps.

Führer: They still have them?

Jodl: Yes, they have red trousers with silver stripes.

Führer: Really, it is wonderful that the Cossacks are marching with us!

General Burgdorf: General von Pannwitz, the Commander of the Cossack division always visits his troops in Cossack uniform. I have seen a photograph of him; he looks quite savage with his crooked sword dangling in the scabbard hanging down front.⁵⁴

In order to understand better how the Cossacks attained such a position in Hitler's Germany and why they fought as an ethnic group with Hitler's army, a brief discussion of the Cossacks, the people and their history is necessary, and it is to this that we shall turn in the next chapter.

THE COSSACKS: THE TSAR'S PRAETORIAN FORCE

"The Cossack Race produced a very favourable impression on me. There is something free and independent, original in it. I did not see cowed faces among them. Here one feels ... a people a little more independent."

N.P. Ogarev

In many respects, the attempt of a reader to learn more about the history of the Cossacks is frustrated by the lack of scholarly works on the subject in any language but Russian. At the time of writing, an in-depth scholarly history on the Cossacks and their origins does not exist in English. William Allen's 1941 study *The Ukraine: A History* provides some information on the subject, but is hardly adequate for a full treatment of Cossack history since its focus is on the Ukraine. Phillip Longworth's book entitled *The Cossacks* (1969) also contributes to the understanding of the topic but tends to be more a popular than a scholarly work. In 1945 Maurice Hindus wrote a book entitled *The Cossacks: The Study of a Warrior People*. Extreme caution should be exercised in utilizing this book since it is filled with inaccuracies and over-simplifications. Finally, there are several Cossack histories written by Cossack writers who emphasize the absence of scholarly works on Cossack history, but who regrettably lack the objectivity necessary to write a good history because of their close personal identification with the subject.

In recent years Dr Bruce Menning of the University of Miami (Ohio) has helped fill this void with his scholarship and subsequent essays on the Cossacks. Much more remains to be done, however, in researching the Cossacks and their origins. Though this lack of scholarly works on the subject is evident with any type of bibliographical review, the topic of the Cossacks and their history is

essential for this study in order to understand their motivations for working with the Germans.

Even the origins of the Cossacks are an issue which is often a point of contention between non-Cossack and some nationalistic Cossack writers. For example, non-Cossack sources normally trace the origins of the Cossacks, as an identifiable group, to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. At that time, they were regarded as border fighters (or bandits) and adventurers who lived on the Steppes where organized government or society was conspicuously absent. Some Cossack writers trace the origin of their people to as early as the tenth century. To quote one author: "In 948, they observed the millenium of their official historical existence according to data of Byzantine, Iranian, Arabian, and even Russian historians."¹ According to this school of thought, in 948 the inhabitants of the Steppe, under a leader name Kasak or Kazak, routed the Khazars in the vicinity of Krasnodar. Through this action a state was formed called Kazakiya (or Cossackia). Though this Cossack writer notes the existence of the Cossacks even before this event, the specific year 948 is given as the beginning of an organized state or self-governing entity.

Menning, on the other hand, in his essay on the military-administrative élite of the Don Cossack Land, traces the origins of the Don Cossacks to "refugees, fugitives and freebooters" who had moved south to the Don steppe in order to avoid the political and social problems present in the sixteenth-century Muscovite state. Once these freebooters arrived, they united with other people of indefinite ethnic origins to form the Don Cossack host.² Albert Seaton takes a similar approach in his pamphlet on the Cossacks describing them as border fighters and adventurers who emerge in documents from the period 1300-1400.³

Even the origin of the name Cossack is disputed. Some authors have attempted to link the term Cossack to a *Kazakh* or a *Kasog*, a name referring to a Circassian from the North Caucasus. As mentioned before, one Cossack writer traces the name to a leader from the tenth century named Kasak or Kazak.⁴ William Allen mentions that some investigators feel the word Cossack was taken from a mispronunciation of the Turkish word, *Kazak* meaning robber.⁵ Whatever its true origin, by the fifteenth century the name had taken its present form and meaning.

Most historians agree on the mixed ethnic origins of the Cossacks; there is no serious reason for labelling the Cossacks as a separate race of people. According to most writers, Cossack and non-

Cossack, the Cossack people are descended from the Turks, Tatars, Russians, Ukrainians and a multitude of other peoples who, at one time or another, settled or passed through the invasion route that stretched from Asia to southern Europe. In recorded times, they have not spoken a distinct Cossack language, although one Cossack writer mentions the Cossacks speaking a mixed Slavonic and Tatar language in the 1550s. Even though they lack a distinct Cossack language, some Cossack writers still insist that Cossacks were not simply Russians but a distinctly separate group of people. Supporters of this viewpoint cite a number of writings from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century, which describe the Cossacks as a separate people until the 1830s, when Tsar Nicholas I commissioned a new history which refers to the Cossacks as fugitive Russians.⁶

The debate on their origins may never be settled to the satisfaction of all parties, but it can be established that the Cossacks emerge as a noticeable group in historical accounts written after the 1400s. This prominence stems from their role in guarding the steppes of southern Russia. Through the fall of the Mongol Empire a measure of peace was brought to the Russians, but the Muscovite state was still subject to regular Tatar raids. In the interest of protecting the Russian people, a series of forts were constructed to assist in repelling the raiders. This was not always effective, so mobile guard units were employed to watch long stretches of the frontier. Cossacks were often used for this hazardous duty. Documents show Tatar Cossacks serving as guard units for Russian, Polish and Lithuanian communities in the latter part of the fourteenth century. Cossacks are recorded in the employ of Moscow as early as 1468, working as border guards and guides. These early Cossacks have names that indicate both Tatar and Russian origins. The earlier records seem to indicate a preponderance of Tatar names, but as early as 1468 the name of Ivan Runo, a Cossack with a Russian name, appears. After the mid-1400s Cossacks with Russian or Ukrainian names seem to outnumber those of Tatar or tribal backgrounds.⁷

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries two distinctive groups of Cossacks emerged on the steppes, that is, in terms of the services they performed. The first and perhaps best known were the free Cossacks who served as guides, patrolled the steppes, and were known to turn to banditry if the need arose. They lived a free and almost nomadic existence on the steppes. The other group was the town Cossacks, in essence cavalry units based in frontier

communities. These Cossacks were virtually mercenaries who fought for pay or occasionally received land grants for their services. The town Cossacks were based not only in the traditionally Cossack southern regions but, in addition, were located in frontier areas like Smolensk and Novgorod. These town or service Cossacks were far more settled than the free Cossacks and were administered by the army department and subject to the Muscovite Foreign Office.

In some respects the free Cossacks prove most intriguing since they were a lawless breed, the brigands of the steppes. The free Cossacks were quite often a problem for the Russian government, and even for that of Poland-Lithuania, but the Tsars recognized the military value of these lawless steppe inhabitants in defending the frontier areas. Thus they encouraged them to send some of their members to Moscow to serve as scouts and cavalymen with the Russian army.⁸

The traditions of the Cossacks and their actual numbers may have been greatly enhanced by the exploits of Dimitri Vishnevetsky. Vishnevetsky brought together the adventurous Cossacks who worked the lower regions of the Dnieper, in search of game and good fishing. He received permission from King Sigismund II of Poland-Lithuania to build a stronghold (1530-50) in the area beyond the cataracts of the Dnieper. This area was considered highly desirable by the Cossacks because it had heavy vegetation and teemed with game and fish. Ultimately it became known as the *Zaporozhskaya Sech*, or the clearing beyond the rapids. The Zaporogian Cossacks developed a reputation for their fierceness, and many southern steppe dwellers sought to be known as Zaporogian Cossacks. The area controlled by the Zaporogians expanded rapidly, eventually becoming a more or less independent state, retaining its autonomy for almost two hundred years.⁹

The Zaporogian, or Zaporozhian, Cossacks were only one group among a number of Cossack groups, or hosts, which formed in the 1500s. Among the best-known hosts were the Ukrainian Cossacks, Zaporogian Cossacks, Slobodsk Cossacks, Don Cossacks, Terek Cossacks, and Yaik Cossacks. The maps on pages 68 and 69 show the location of all these groups in the area north of the Black-Caspian Sea region. Interestingly, Cossack hosts also developed in the vast regions of Siberia. The main source, however, of Cossack history and traditions came from the area bordered by the Dnieper on the west and the Urals on the east.

As mentioned earlier, the origins of the Cossack peoples and their free and independent nature undoubtedly came from their frontier

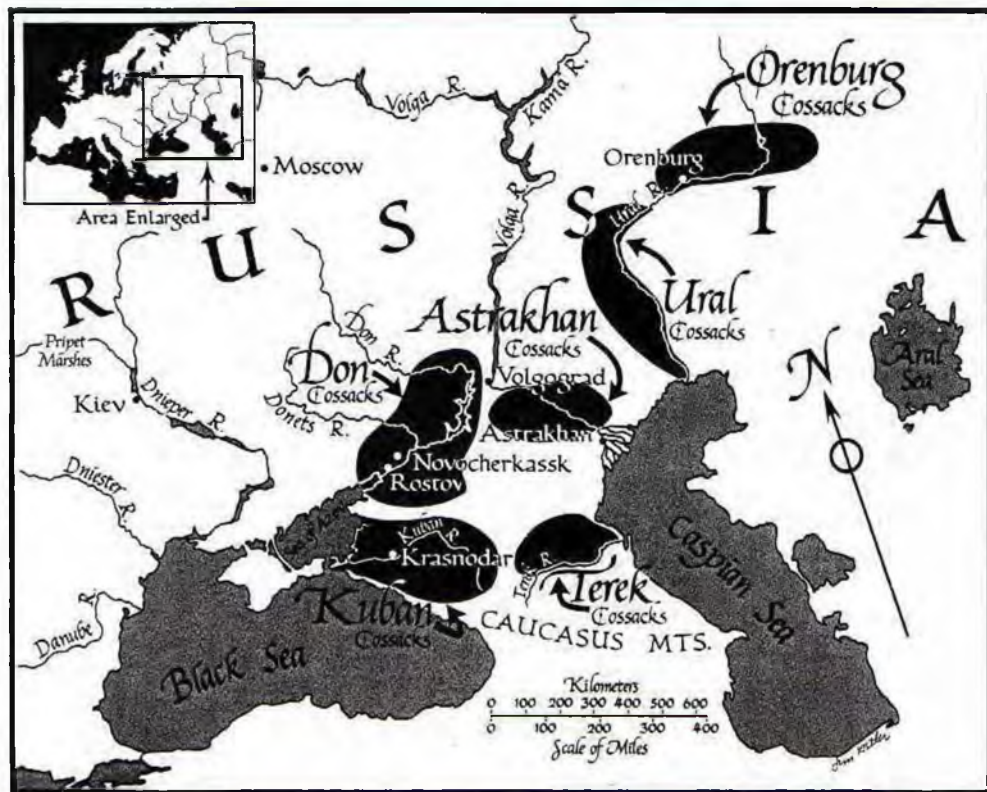


Cossack Hosts in Europe and Asia, 1914.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. DON | 7. SEMIRECHYE |
| 2. KUBAN | 8. SIBERIAN |
| 3. TEREK | 9. TRANSBAIKAL |
| 4. ASTRAKHAN | 10. AMUR |
| 5. URAL | 11. USSURI |
| 6. ORENBURG | |

traditions, as they emerge as an identifiable people in the fifteenth century. This independent tradition was encouraged, and the number of Cossacks was increased by events in Muscovite Russia in the 1500s. Until the mid-1500s the right of the Russian peasants to move was seldom restricted. However, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, events caused the Muscovite government to adopt a more restrictive policy.

During this period, the Russian government accomplished the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan, opening up the rich black belt of what is now southern Russia for settlement. The end result of this conquest was the migration of droves of peasants who sought to work this excellent soil. Furthermore, in 1564 Ivan IV introduced the *Oprichnina*,¹⁰ which fell heavily on the peasant classes, again causing a substantial flow of refugees to the south. Even decrees which supposedly prohibited the peasants from moving may have promoted the flow of many peasants southward. If a peasant wished to leave the land, legally, he had to settle a staggering obligation



The Cossack Hosts in Europe, 1914.

Cossack
Areas



which included rent, loans for seed, implements and livestock, and often a departure fee. Since most peasants did not have the financial resources, the best alternative for the heavily-burdened peasant was to flee to the steppe areas, only recently opened to colonization, where he might be free.¹¹

By the early seventeenth century, refugee peasants had enlarged many of the southern communities, including Cossack areas, seeking a better life with the Cossacks or in the newly-conquered lands. Moscow, at this stage, had only slight control over the Cossack communities but, as early as the seventeenth century, the various Cossack hosts recognized the overlordship of the Tsar and received funds and supplies from the Tsar in exchange for supplying soldiers. Still, the actual control that Moscow could exercise over the Don, or the Zaporozhian Cossacks, was limited. The Tsar with good cause regarded Don, Yaik and Zaporozhian Cossacks with mistrust. These hosts in particular were known for providing refuge for runaway serfs, thieves and robbers. Furthermore, they frequently raided Turkish settlements and mounted pirate expeditions in the Black Sea.

The tendency of Moscow, however, to exert more control over the Cossacks was noticeable by the early seventeenth century. For example, Tsar Michael, recognising the shortages of armaments and food which plagued the Don Cossacks in the early 1600s, offered them munitions, grain and spirits. This aid was accepted by the Cossacks since at that time they were under repeated attacks by Tatar raiders. As another sign of official favour, in 1615 the Tsar began to allow them to trade duty free with Russian communities. Of far greater significance, however, was the decision of the Tsar to send the Don Cossacks a Tsarist banner, recognizing military and political links between Moscow and the Don. This same offer was extended to the Volga, Terek and Yaik hosts, with the stipulation that the Cossacks serve the Tsar.

The Cossacks were not easily swayed by gifts and promises from Moscow and continued to pursue a decidedly independent domestic and foreign policy. For example, the Cossacks sporadically raided Turkish and Tatar settlements, even when Moscow opposed such raids. This resulted in a break in relations between the Don Cossacks and the Muscovite government in 1652.¹²

The dangers inherent in utilizing Cossack soldiers were well illustrated by the revolt of Stenka Razin in 1667. Razin was a Don Cossack who led a major peasant revolt which, for a period of time, threatened the existence of the Muscovite state. From 1667 to 1670,

Razin and his rebels rampaged across an area that stretched from Cherkassk in the south to as far north as Samara. By 1671 Razin's revolt was contained and he was executed.¹³

It would be a mistake, however, to regard Razin's rebellion as a purely Cossack revolt against the Russian government. The motivations for Razin's revolt are perhaps best described by Richard Pipes in his book *Russia Under the Old Regime*. According to Professor Pipes: "Approximately once a century Russian peasants went on the rampage killing landlords and officials, burning estates and seizing properties."¹⁴ The first of these rebellions occurred in 1667 with Razin's revolt. Razin's rebellion, and the other peasant revolts that followed, were characterized by a virtual lack of political aims. Razin and his peasants revolted against the miserable conditions in Russia rather than attempting to enthrone a new Tsar or to establish an independent state. It is significant, however, that these revolts centred in the southern steppe regions where Moscow had at best minimal control. In this area, the Cossacks could develop many independent ideas and ideals and maintain free and independent traditions. Through this revolt Razin became a folk hero in the region and particularly to the Cossacks.

The major impact of Razin's revolt was making many within Tsarist circles aware of the dangers of a Cossack society that was too independent. In its wake the Muscovite government stripped the Cossacks of two important powers by depriving them of the right to harbour fugitives and the right to conduct foreign policy, independent of Moscow.¹⁵

Peter the Great was perhaps responsible for taking steps that would result in the curtailment of Cossack independence. With the aim of controlling the regions along the Black Sea, his government took measures once and for all to stem the flow of peasants who sought refuge in the land of the Cossacks with its free and independent traditions. Following this action, Peter forbade the Cossacks their age-old privileges of fishing near the mouth of the Don and mining salt on the upper Don. Due to the controls established through Peter's policies, a revolt began in the Don region in 1707. The revolt was led by a Don Cossack, named Kondrati Bulavin, and Moscow was unable to rally enough loyalist Cossacks to defeat Bulavin until 1709. Once the revolt was quelled, the Cossacks still retained a good deal of internal autonomy, but Peter's government watched the Don country carefully.¹⁶

Following the Don revolt in 1707, another revolt involving Cossacks began in the Ukraine. This was led by Mazepa, *Hetman*

(Chief or Commander in Chief) of the Ukraine, and involved both the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Both of these hosts, in cooperation with Mazepa, took to the field as allies of the King of Sweden against Tsar Peter in the battle of Poltava. The end result of this revolt and its failure in battle was the subjugation of the Ukraine by Peter's government. With their defeat the Ukrainian host began a period of decline and ultimately ceased to exist.¹⁷ The results for the Zaporozhian host were also significant. Peter's forces moved quickly and decisively against the "Zaporozhian *Sech*", long recognized as a central point of Cossack strength and independence. The Tsar's armies laid siege to the *Sech* in the summer of 1709 and, within three days, the *Sech* was overrun and the buildings within it were destroyed.¹⁸

Following the reduction of the *Sech*, the Tsarist government began rapidly to assert stronger controls over the Cossacks. For example, in 1721 the Host (*Voiska*) was subordinated to the Imperial Military College, in 1723 the Tsar assumed the authority to appoint the Don *Ataman* and in 1775 the Tsarist government implemented major reforms in local Don Cossack government. It was Peter's reforms, or perhaps revisions, that set a policy described by one author as a "dual policy of subordination and perpetuation". Through this policy the Cossacks were subordinated to imperial Tsarist control but their traditional military heritage and a portion of their unique social and political institutions were retained. Through subordination and perpetuation the Cossacks became obedient servants of the state, serving particularly through their heritage as a military society.¹⁹

Peter's efforts to control the southern regions and specifically the Cossacks brought about a period of relative peace for the Cossack lands, that is, until the strong centralizing rule of Catherine the Great (beginning in 1762) prompted yet another crisis. Between 1773 and 1775, Emelian Pugachev, a Don Cossack, led a large number of peasants as well as some of his fellow Cossacks in a major rebellion which gave him control of an area stretching from Tsaritsyn to Osa (on the Kama), and as far east as the Tobol. Like his predecessor Razin, Pugachev did not begin his rebellion with clear-cut principles or goals. He and his followers were merely reacting to the economic and political pressures of that period. In order to broaden his base of support, Pugachev claimed to be Tsar Peter III, the deceased husband of Catherine, returning to claim his position. As with other such peasant revolts, once Catherine marshalled her forces the revolt was crushed, and Pugachev beheaded.²⁰

From Razin's revolt in 1667 until Pugachev's death in 1774 there were a substantial number of uprisings in southern Russia, all involving elements of the Cossack hosts. Despite the potential threat of the Cossacks, they were allowed to retain a substantial amount of independence. The Russian Tsars did restrict their freedom but saw the advantages of Peter's policy of "subordination and perpetuation".

For example, the traditional Cossack governmental structure centred on a local societal group called a host (*voiska*). Since earliest times, Cossack hosts had gathered together in a democratic style of meeting or assembly. They would discuss items of concern or questions of policy, and ultimately reach decisions by acclamation. From their number they elected an *Ataman* (or headman) to represent the host and carry out the decisions of the assembly. While, as mentioned earlier, the Tsar took the authority to appoint the *Ataman* of the Don Cossack as early as 1723, this distinctive governmental structure was retained. Similar meetings were held on the *stanitsa* level to regulate their local affairs. (*Stanitsa* is a village or administrative district in the Cossack regions of Russia.) As the *voiskas* grew in size, the *Ataman* utilized a council of elders, composed of former *Atamans* and other local leaders, to give their advice in the interim since assembly meetings were infrequent.²¹ As it slowly extended its control over the *Voiskas*, the Russian government did not obliterate this traditional societal structure, but instead asserted its control over it.

The rebellions of Razin and Pugachev, led by Cossacks, in addition to the centralizing tendencies during the reigns of Peter and Catherine, led the Tsarist government to impose stricter controls on the Cossacks throughout the eighteenth century. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had seen the Cossacks serve as both a hindrance to Russian expansion and, intermittently, as rather questionable allies of Russia. The role of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in Mazepa's revolt caused Peter the Great virtually to obliterate this host, although in the eighteenth century Potemkin (Catherine the Great's favourite) reformed some of the elements and redesignated them as the Black Sea hosts.²² The Yaik Cossacks had posed a serious threat to the Russian government during the Pugachev rebellion. Because of this, they were stripped of their identity and renamed the Ural Cossacks. Even the Yaik river was renamed the Ural in an attempt to rid Russia of this seditious name.²³

It was in the wake of the Pugachev rebellion, and under the strong hand of Potemkin, that stronger controls were placed over the

hosts. In addition to redesignating a number of the hosts, Potemkin also staged a major overhaul of the local Cossack government. Through his reforms he separated the Cossack government into two distinct spheres: civilian and military, and reorganized the host government. Perhaps the most important, Catherine implemented his recommendation to grant all Don Cossack officers the status of staff officers in the Russian army. According to the existing table of ranks, holders of staff officer rank were hereditary nobility in Russia.²⁴ Even though the original granting of nobility was only to Don Cossack officers, this was one of many occasions where the Don host was utilized as the testing ground for new Tsarist policies for all hosts.

Potemkin was vitally interested in the maintenance and strengthening of the Cossack hosts. A military reformer and a proponent of the light cavalry, he sought to augment the regular military organizations with Cossacks to colonize the southern frontier areas. The Cossacks seemed a logical alternative to regular Russian soldiers in defending the frontier since they had settled in the southern areas and were virtually self-supporting. In addition, with their high degree of mobility and knowledge of the tactics most commonly used by the tribes that raided the southern frontier, the Cossacks were a valuable source of reinforcements to existing forces.²⁵

Between the mid-1700s and the end of the century, the Russian government was successful in more closely assimilating the Cossacks into the mainstream of Russian culture. In fact a transition was occurring which would transform the Cossacks from the brigands of the steppe to the praetorian guard of the Tsars.

Following Potemkin's reforms, Russia, like the other major powers, was heavily involved in the Napoleonic Wars, which would virtually monopolize her energies from the last decade of the eighteenth century until 1815. During this period, with all the military demands on the major powers, Russia again found the Cossacks to be an important resource. They fought bravely during the Napoleonic Wars and caught the attention of an ambitious Russian officer, Major-General A.I. Chernyshev. It was Chernyshev who subsequently initiated the major reforms that ensured a significant role for the Cossacks in modern Russia and also permitted them to retain, to a considerable degree, their autonomy.²⁶

Aleksandr Ivanovich Chernyshev was an ambitious and aggressive officer who became a national figure during the Napoleonic Wars. A cavalry officer, he commanded Cossack units, and in 1812 served briefly as chief of staff for M.I. Platov, *Ataman* of the

Don Cossacks. He emerged from the Napoleonic Wars with an impressive military reputation and as a proponent for the utilization of both large and small mobile striking forces to wreck the enemies' rear areas. The use of small cavalry units in daring attacks led by competent and aggressive commanders, was, in Chernyshev's opinion, of great importance for future wars. With this in mind, Chernyshev, who was respected by the Tsar, set out to increase and perpetuate the Cossack cavalry in Imperial Russia.

In the years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Chernyshev and two other ranking officers began pushing to institutionalize the Cossack system and impose a standardized structure on all the hosts. Chernyshev sought to go much further than Potemkin had done, since the focus of his reforms were purely for the maintenance and strengthening of the hosts as a major military source for the Russian government. Recognizing the rather volatile nature of the hosts, as seen through the disturbances of the last century, Chernyshev worked judiciously through a reform committee (recommended by A.K. Denisov, *Ataman* of the Don Cossacks).²⁷

From 1821 to 1845 the reform committee was responsible for firmly placing imperial control over Cossack life. This was accomplished through the statute of 1835 which was the first piece of Russian legislation that covered all areas of Cossack life. At first applying only to Don Cossacks, the statute specified the length of service as 25 years for officers and 30 years for the enlisted. Extensive regulations dictated the size of regiments, uniforming of Cossacks and rates of pay for their services. Yet recognizing their sensitivity in matters of control, the statute provided for the military leader of the Don host to have powers equivalent to an army corps commander. In addition, Cossacks were no longer to serve under regular Russian officers but rather under russified Cossack officers. Militarily, the hosts were still locked into a system devised by and for the Russian government. The statute of 1835 also made substantial changes in local government but since it was a document drafted by military reformers it essentially left *stanitsa* matters in the hands of Cossacks to include local administration and judicial affairs. It did, however, include provisions for the redistribution of land so that every male Cossack would have 30 *desiatiny* (archaic measure equal to 2.7 acres) of land.²⁸

While originally promulgated for the Don host, the 1835 statute was extended to the remaining hosts in the 1840s, and this action, together with a myriad of regulations issued by Chernyshev as head

of the Imperial War Ministry (1827-52), structured and regulated the Cossacks to Moscow's advantage. By 1852 he could report with pride that in a quarter of a century the number of Cossack service detachments had almost doubled. In fact, if needed, the war ministry could utilize 105 Cossack regiments, with another 100,000 Cossack cavalymen in reserve.²⁹

Though there would be minor alterations to Chernyshev's reforms, the formal identification of the Cossacks as a military caste had occurred. Through their status as a military caste, the Cossacks performed service disproportionate to their numbers. More than 60 per cent of the male Cossacks performed military duties, as compared to 31 per cent of the other Tsarist subjects. (These figures are based on the first decade of the twentieth century.)³⁰ In addition to the extended duty imposed on male Cossacks, there were fiscal burdens imposed on Cossacks not borne by regular Russian soldiers. A Cossack soldier, frequently a cavalryman, had to provide his own horse, saddle, uniform and other basic military equipment.³¹ The Russian government did supply a rifle for the individual Cossack cavalryman, but one half of the cost was charged to the host.³² Such an arrangement was, needless to say, a great bargain for the Russian government since the Cossacks provided over 70 per cent of the Russian cavalry.³³

By the nineteenth century the Tsars had extremely able defenders in the Cossack hosts. Because they had only partially russified the hosts and had permitted them to retain their unique social and military organizations, the Cossacks were firm supporters of the Tsar. So firm were they in support of the Tsar that, during the nineteenth century, some came to regard them as the symbol of Tsarist oppression. This reputation came from Tsarist use of Cossacks to subdue rioters and rebels throughout the Russian Empire.³⁴ Armed with the deadly *nagaika*,³⁵ the Cossacks were instrumental in suppressing strikes and breaking up student demonstrations throughout the Russian Empire. They were used in the suppression of the Polish revolts and disorders in the nineteenth century, characterizing their actions with swift and brutal restraint of rioters. They followed the Tsar and his orders with extreme zeal as though Tsarism was something in which they had a personal interest.

The imperial method of governing the Cossacks, as developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was very effective. The concept of "subordination and perpetuation",³⁶ designed by Peter and his successors and brought to perfection by Potemkin and

Chernyshev, had made them strong supporters of the Tsar. At the same time, perpetuation of Cossack governmental and societal systems and the maintenance of this unique military society had permitted this nationality to retain a substantial amount of local autonomy and pride in their worth to the state. As the nineteenth century ended, the policy of allowing the Cossacks to retain such a privileged position seemed to be successful and to have few, if any, negative points.

The twentieth century found Cossackia a strong region in Imperial Russia. By this time Moscow recognized a total of eleven Cossack *voiska*, or hosts, in the Russian Empire: the Kuban, Terek, Don, Astrakhan, Ural, Orenburg, Siberian, Semirechiesk, Trans-Baikal, Amur and the Ussuri. These recognized Cossack regions included a total of roughly 600,000 square kilometres and a total population of more than six million. As a result of Chernyshev's reforms, the *voiska* still had their own local administration, their own communal lands and even some industrial developments. Each host was still led by an appointed (rather than elected) *Ataman* who was subordinate to the Cossack *voiska* of the Russian war ministry. Each host was further subdivided into *ikrugi* (or districts) again administered by an *Ataman* and, within the *ikrugi*, were the *stanitsas* (or towns) also ruled by an *Ataman*.³⁷ Since military affairs were a significant concern of the Cossacks, each *voiska* had its own military staff to organize and mobilize military units.

For Russia the twentieth century had begun with a disastrous war, and, in its wake, a rebellion. In the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05, Cossack units were sent eastward to serve as cavalry and reconnaissance units, performing with their traditional bravery and valour, but, when they returned, following the unsuccessful campaign, they found dissension throughout Russia, resulting from the Revolution of 1905. The strain on Cossack families, resulting from the call-up for the Russo-Japanese war, followed by additional service for police duties in 1906, pushed some units to the brink of rebellion. Some Cossack units actually refused to mobilize for police duties necessitated by the revolution of 1905–07. The financial drain on the Cossack family farms was simply too great. V.I. Lenin, in his writings, was quick to grasp the significance of the Cossack reticence to serve the government:

In the December days the Moscow proletariat gave us splendid lessons in the ideological processing of troops. For example, on December 8 on Strastnaya Square, when a crowd sur-

rounded the Cossacks, mixed with them, made friends with them and persuaded them to go back. Or on the tenth of the Presnya, when two girl workers carrying a red banner in a crowd of ten thousand rushed to meet the Cossacks shouting "kill us! While we're alive we won't yield up the banner." The Cossacks were discountenanced and galloped away to the shouts of the crowd: "Long live the Cossacks".³⁸

The majority of the Cossack units performed their duties as required, galloping into crowds of demonstrators with their deadly *nagaikas* and forcing the demonstrators to flee. However, the unreliability of some units and the failure of others to mobilize was a warning forecast of 1917.

Occasional internal turmoil and dissension continued to flare up in the Cossack regions until the outbreak of the First World War. When that conflict erupted, Russia and the Cossack *voiskas* were caught up in a burst of patriotic fervour that cast aside, at least for the time being, the problems facing the Cossacks. As might be expected, the Cossacks mobilized an impressive force of fighting men for the war effort. A total of 939 cavalry squadrons was raised (each squadron consisting of 100 men) for the field armies. Of these squadrons, 360 came from the Don, 202 from the Kuban, 107 from the Orenberg, 66 from the Terek, and 54 each from the Siberian and Transbaikalian Cossacks. The smaller hosts, i.e., the Astrakhan, Semirychie, Amur and Ussuri Cossacks, provided less than 14 squadrons each.³⁹ As one writer noted, the Cossack *voiskas* called up a total of 400,000 men, which meant that more than 20 per cent of the male Cossack population was mobilized.⁴⁰

In keeping with their military tradition, the Cossacks performed bravely in a variety of campaigns throughout the First World War. They were the terror of East Prussia as they briefly moved into the homeland of the Junkers with Samsonov's army, even though the latter was ultimately defeated in the first two months of the war. In campaigns against the Turks in 1916, the Cossacks were very effective during the July offensive which resulted in the capture of the city of Erzincan and the virtual immobilization of the Turkish Third Army.⁴¹

By 1917, however, the creaking Russian war machinery and the archaic government simply broke down; and the March Revolution brought an end to the Romanov dynasty. The provisional government which followed the Romanov collapse attempted to provide the leadership the country needed, but in November of 1917 the

Bolshevik coup ended the provisional government, and Lenin and his faction came to power.

Since the Cossacks traditionally served the crown so effectively in times of civil disorder, their performance during March and November of 1917 is significant. At the beginning of the first revolution the Cossacks were called to St Petersburg to disperse the demonstrators who were protesting over food shortages. Though ordered to assist the government with a traditional Cossack assignment, they declined to move, claiming that insufficient infantry was available to support them. Shortly thereafter, the *Konovi* (horse), or the Guard Cossacks, and Don Regiments 1st, 4th, and 15th joined the mutineers.⁴² *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*), edited by Maxim Gorky, later noted the significance of the Cossack activities:

At the beginning of the Revolution the Cossacks refused to shoot down the people. When Kornilov marched on Petrograd they refused to follow him. From passive loyalty to the Revolution the Cossacks have passed to an active political offensive (against it). From the background of the Revolution, they have suddenly advanced to the front of the stage.⁴³

Even Trotsky, who was always suspicious of Cossack intentions, recorded the defection of the Cossacks from their traditional role of preservers of internal order. According to Trotsky, when the demonstrators massed, demanding food, the Cossacks were called in. Individual demonstrators, however, had talked to the Cossacks and they had promised not to shoot into the crowd. When a policeman struck a woman, the Cossacks drove the police away. When the Cossacks rode into the ranks of the demonstrators, some of them smiled and one even winked at the demonstrators.⁴⁴ Like many Russian soldiers, the Cossacks were unhappy with the Tsar's leadership in the war. Like other Russian units, the fighting cohesion and discipline of the Cossack units had faded after three years of bitter fighting on the eastern front. By March of 1917, the Cossacks could no longer be regarded as the bulwark of the Tsarist government.

When this government fell, the provisional government took one significant step which affected the Cossack units. It allowed partial autonomy to the Cossacks. True, the case could be made that the autonomy of the Cossacks was recognized by the Tsarist government but, in reality, this was more theory than fact. The autonomy given by the provisional government was real in that it permitted the reconstitution of the Cossack *krugs* or parliaments which expressed

the popular will. Several *krugs* were organized in 1917, each with a specific host affiliation. The most active and the most vocal was the Don *krug* which elected as its *Ataman*, General A.M. Kaledin.⁴⁵

Adding to the suspicions caused by this revival of the age-old separatistic tendencies of the Cossacks were the activities of the Cossack General, Lavr Georgevich Kornilov. Kornilov was one of the more successful Cossack officers who had distinguished himself in the ill-fated Brusilov offensive as commander of the Eighth Russian Army. Because of his leadership record, Alexander Kerensky appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the southern front in an attempt to stem the total rout of Russian forces in that region. Though successful, Kornilov wished to impose his draconian disciplinary measures on the entire Russian Army, and to restore discipline he planned to abolish the soldiers' Soviets. Supporting him in this proposal was General A.M. Kaledin, another Cossack general. Both Kornilov and Kaledin were in Petrograd between August 25 and 27, 1917, to make this recommendation to the state conference, called into session by Kerensky. The hero's welcome for Kornilov caused both the provisional government and the Bolsheviks to question Kornilov's political motives. With the enthusiasm exhibited for his visit, the possibility of his leading an anti-revolutionary coup did not seem unlikely.⁴⁶

The controversy over Kornilov's and Kaledin's intentions reached a climax when General Kornilov staged his attempted march on Petrograd in early September, 1917. Under the pretence of saving the provisional government from the Bolsheviks, Kornilov ordered one of his co-conspirators, General A.M. Krymov, to march on the capital and secure it from the Bolsheviks. The coup ended in miserable failure when Krymov's troops stopped a day's march from Petrograd and promptly disintegrated. Kornilov subsequently contacted General Kaledin and attempted to persuade him to move on Moscow with his Cossacks, but the latter declined due to the unreliability of his available Cossack regiments. With the disintegration of Kornilov's military strength, Kerensky sought to arrest both Kornilov and Kaledin. The provisional government sent word of Kerensky's desire to arrest Kaledin to the Don Cossack *krug*. Between September 18 and 27 the Cossack *krug* investigated the charges against their *Ataman* and found them without substance. The *krug* refused to hand Kaledin over to the provisional government and continued to pursue an independent line regarding all internal matters. Furthermore, they raised questions on the validity of "revolutionary justice" as seen in the charges against

Kaledin and, in addition, indicated their dislike of the proposed Bolshevik agrarian policies.⁴⁷

Thus the Don *krug* government alienated itself, first from the provisional government and later from the Bolshevik government. Even while the Don *krug* was asserting its independence in internal matters, it was also building alliances with other Cossack groups. As the Cossacks of the Don had structured their own government, the Cossacks of the Kuban, the Orenburg, the Amur, the Terek and the Transbaikal had also created their own governmental structures. Recognizing the pressures from the central government upon all Cossack groups, a union of Cossack hosts was formed to solidify the resistance of all hosts to the ominous trends developing in the new Bolshevik-led government.⁴⁸

The final act which was to set the Bolshevik government against the hosts occurred in early November 1917. As the provisional government was crumbling, a deputation from the union of Cossack hosts called on Kerensky at the Winter Palace, urging him to take action against the centre of subversion – Lenin's men at the Smolny Institute. Kerensky agreed to move and ordered General Krasnov from the northern front and the 1st, 4th and 14th Cossack Regiments to move to Petrograd. When this failed, due to the unreliability of these Cossack units, Krasnov moved additional Cossacks toward the city, only to see them subverted by agitators. In the end Krasnov's forces simply faded away and, in the wake of this action, Lenin and the Bolsheviks came to power.⁴⁹ It is significant that the initial effort to stop the Bolsheviks came from Cossack troops led by Krasnov, a Cossack general.

When this attempt failed, Krasnov and Kornilov proceeded to the Don region and joined Kaledin preparing to make the Don a centre of resistance against the Bolshevik government. Even as these Cossacks and former Tsarist officers were organizing, the Bolsheviks had already identified the threat and had made plans accordingly. On December 7, 1917 Trotsky ordered Ensign N.V. Krylenko to prepare Bolshevik forces to "wipe off the face of the earth the counter-revolution of the Cossack generals and the cadet bourgeoisie".⁵⁰ Lenin apparently agreed that the Don region was a hotbed of sedition, comparing it to the *Vendée* in the French Revolution (i.e., he saw it as a base for counter-revolution).⁵¹ Three days after Trotsky's orders, a revolutionary coup caused Rostov to fall into Bolshevik hands, making it the first major city in the Cossack region to fall under Bolshevik control.

As the pressure of a military campaign was placed on the hosts,

they seemed to be unwilling to defend their newly-formed Cossack state. When General Kaledin's troops were ordered to retake Rostov, Kaledin was forced to admit the total unreliability of his Cossacks. The main Bolshevik force did not approach the Cossack lands of the Don and the Kuban until January 1918, but despite the passage of a month the Cossacks were unprepared. On February 25, 1918 Bolshevik forces entered Novocherkassk and Lieutenant-Colonel Golubov, a Bolshevik Cossack, entered the *krug* hall and dissolved the *krug*. Of the thousands that had originally followed Kaledin's government, only General Popov and 1,500 men escaped to the steppes.⁵²

In the wake of the Don *krug*'s demise, the other Cossack regimes disintegrated. Early in 1918, the Orenburg government fell, soon to be followed by the Ural regime. However, by April 1918 Kornilov's Kuban group was strong enough to mount an attack on Yekaterinodar. In the course of the attack Kornilov was killed, thus depriving the Cossack and White Russian cause of one of its most talented military leaders.⁵³

The Bolshevik rule in the Don and Kuban ultimately proved unpopular since the Bolsheviks stabled their horses in churches, pillaged Cossack farms for supplies, and used the Revolution as an excuse to wage their personal vendettas. When German forces advanced across southern Russia in April-May, 1918, the Bolshevik regime collapsed and the independent Cossack government emerged again. With both the White army under General Denikin and the German army providing anti-Bolshevik strength, the Don *krug* recovered in the spring of 1918 and elected General Peter N. Krasnov as its *Ataman*.

General Krasnov took this position with what amounted to dictatorial powers. He regarded as a priority the establishment of good relations with the Germans and the Allies. In the months that followed, he established ties with the German-supported Ukrainian government of General Paul Skoropadski (Ukrainian *Hetman*) and, in addition, addressed a personal appeal to Kaiser Wilhelm II, relating the advantages of the future trade relations between Germany and the Cossack Don. Internally, Krasnov developed a land reform programme, and began dividing the larger estates among the *inogorodni*.⁵⁴ He also campaigned to renew the Cossack spirit and to encourage Cossacks to be proud of their history and traditions.⁵⁵

At first, the campaign appeared successful. By the end of the summer Krasnov and his forces had succeeded in clearing the Don

of Bolshevik forces. In this accomplishment he was not alone, for the Cossacks of the other hosts ejected their Bolshevik leaders during the same period. In June Siberia revolted against the Bolsheviks, the Transbaikal in August, Ussuri and Amur regions in September, and the Ural host followed shortly after.

All Russia, including the Cossack regions, was war weary, and this factor, coupled with the Cossacks' separatism, made Krasnov's successes short-lived. Christmas of 1918 found Bolshevik agitators again moving through the Cossack troops, resulting in wholesale desertions. Krasnov, recognizing his inability to manage the situation, resigned. The same decay of fighting morale was occurring throughout the Cossack areas and the change of an *Ataman* could not halt the steady disintegration.⁵⁶ Due to the collapse of traditional Cossack units, they were in 1919 integrated into the White armies and ceased to be a viable independent force.

In terms of leadership, the Cossacks never produced a leader who could inspire them to work together, or who could provide both the military and political guidance necessary for success. Kornilov was solely a military man and became an early casualty of the civil war. Kaledin, the *Ataman*, was a leader with vision; but he did not possess the charismatic powers to build a strong following within the Don host, let alone with other hosts. Krasnov did build up a following, but his reactionary policies and his strong ties with the Germans were to prove his undoing.⁵⁷

By 1920 it was obvious that the White cause, and with it the Cossack cause, was lost. In recognition of this fact, many of the die-hard Cossacks embarked from Novorossiisk in order to escape the Bolsheviks. Some settled in Turkey, others in Prague and Yugoslavia. Another substantial colony was founded in Paris with smaller settlements in Peru and Manchuria. Some of the exiles simply could not tolerate a life outside the Don or the Transbaikal and soon returned home, complete with public recantations.

The Cossacks who remained in the Soviet Union and those who returned from temporary exile found their worst fears of the Bolsheviks to be well-founded. Despite earlier Bolshevik promises, the Cossacks lost all their privileges. There were no longer any distinctive Cossack regiments and the Cossacks were treated like the other peasants. Because of the large numbers of Cossacks who worked with the White armies, Cossacks were forbidden to join the newly-formed Red Army, unless the individual could prove prior service with the Red Army during the Civil War. In short, the Bolsheviks felt that the Cossacks could not be trusted. Perhaps

Trotsky best summed up the Bolshevik attitude when he inspected a group of "Red" Cossacks led by an ex-Sergeant-major named Semën Buděnný (later Marshal Buděnný). Trotsky noted "Where he leads his gang they will go; for the Reds today, tomorrow for the Whites."⁵⁸ The Bolshevik victory meant a total eclipse for the Cossacks and their traditional way of life.

This brief review of the Cossacks and their history indicates a long-standing tradition within the Cossack hosts for some type of independence. They gave up their independence and, in return for special privileges, served as the Tsar's elite troops for some 300 years. The policies of Potemkin and Chernyshev, and specifically the Tsarist policy of "subordination and perpetuation", had given the Cossacks a special identity. The Bolshevik government, however, was not willing to accord the Cossacks any special privileges, especially after their separatistic and anti-Bolshevik behaviour. Hence, once in control, the new Soviet government quickly stripped the Cossacks of their privileges and subjected them to a programme of russification.

There was much bitterness on the Don, in the Kuban, in the Ural region and in all Cossack areas over the loss of traditional identity. The Bolsheviks had pledged recognition of the Cossacks, their military units and their traditional uniforms, but once in power they quickly forgot their pledge. The broken promises and the privations of the early 1920s fed the discontent in the Cossack regions. After a brief period of relief provided by the New Economic Policy, the collectivization of agriculture, beginning in 1929, brought new misery to the Cossacks, who were largely agricultural.

Consequently, when the German army launched its offensive against the Soviet Union, there were substantial numbers of Cossacks who regarded the prospect of lifting the Bolshevik yoke from their shoulders as liberation. Furthermore, the Cossack *émigré* communities in France, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Germany watched the German advance with enthusiasm and, from the beginning of the campaign, offered volunteers from their ranks to liberate the Cossack territories from Bolshevism. As the German army advanced into the Don region and the Kuban, many Cossacks sought again to find the identity that they had lost in 1920. Old traditional uniforms were brought out of hiding places and again the *Stanitsa-Ataman* governing structure began to function. The Germans were not at all slow to appreciate this opportunity. Soon volunteer groups were being formed, utilizing the desire in the *stanitsas* for the old traditional identity and privileges. For reasons



12. One of the many groups of Cossack refugees after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. This Kuban Cossack choir is shown in Parma, Italy in 1928. (Author's collection.)

which are not entirely clear, the Soviet government in 1936 did redesignate five cavalry divisions as Cossack divisions and lifted the ban on Cossacks and sons of Cossacks from serving in the Red Army.⁵⁹ It is unlikely, however, that such gestures satisfied the Cossacks as the divisions were not exclusively recruited from the old hosts. Furthermore, since this action was not accomplished by any political recognition of the Cossack hosts, it was by all appearances only an effort on the part of the Soviet government to improve its military preparedness. It did not amount to a genuine recognition of the Cossack hosts or their unique political and social institutions, and it was not seen as such.

THE DE-SLAVIZATION OF THE COSSACKS

But the practical accomplishment of a policy of russifying the Cossack people was not so simple. The Cossacks were very conscious that they were a completely different people than the Russians and were from Gothic-Cherkessian and not Slavic origins.

Records of the *Reichsminister* for the
Occupied Eastern Territories, 1944

It is difficult to determine with any accuracy when and where, during the Second World War, the first Cossack volunteers were organized. Somewhere on the eastern front in the summer or autumn of 1941 German commanders began to use Cossack cavalry for scouting or reconnaissance purposes. As happened in so many other instances with volunteer units, success brought about an expansion of their use.

German records from the period 1941–42 cite numerous instances of Cossacks being used in the service of the German Army. For example on May 17, 1942, the records of the 47th Panzer Corps, an element of Army Group Centre, contain an order authorizing the establishment of two Cossack platoons under the jurisdiction of the corps supply commander. The first platoon was to consist of a total of 35 men, including one officer, four non-commissioned officers and 30 enlisted men. The second platoon was structured similarly, with 35 enlisted men and one officer. The two platoons had clearly defined assignments including:

1. fighting and protection against partisans;
2. requisitioning of food for the P.O.W. camps;
3. labour service at supply points.

As was generally the case with eastern volunteers, the orders stated that the Cossack platoons were to be supplied with captured equipment. Hence, the platoon selected for fighting partisans and

supplying food to prisoner-of-war camps was given 30 Yugoslav carbines and one Russian machine gun. The other platoon was to be given weapons drawn from recently captured Russian stocks.¹ Shoes and field equipment were to be supplied from captured equipment but the field blouse, trousers and garrison hat were both German and Soviet – the latter only if it could successfully blend with German clothing. Uniform insignia and decorations were to be governed by corps headquarters. The order also clarified that the Cossacks would receive the same rations as those issued to regular German forces, but specified that tobacco and alcohol would only be available in limited quantities.²

This unit, organized by the 47th Panzer Corps, had a limited assignment in terms of combat duty, but was well-organized by virtue of very specific orders issued by headquarters. A more combat-oriented unit was organized by the commander of the Seventeenth Army. On July 30, 1942 orders were sent by the Chief of Staff of this army group to establish a Cossack cavalry regiment entitled the "Platov" Regiment.³ One surviving Cossack officer indicated that the regiment actually had a precursor unit called the Dubrovski Battalion,⁴ organised in the Army Group South region in November or December of 1941. Commanded by a Don Cossack, its success resulted in its enlargement to the Platov Regiment.⁵ The Platov Regiment was a full cavalry unit consisting of 325 soldiers equipped with 356 horses. The name Platov was selected in memory of General Matvei Platov, famous for his leadership of the Cossack cavalry during the Napoleonic wars.⁶

The Platov Regiment, like so many volunteer units in this early period, had a mixture of German and Cossack personnel. For example, the regimental commander, his adjutant, the supply officer, the regimental doctor, and the regimental veterinarian were all German. The regimental organizational chart also indicates that most of the unit's non-commissioned officers were German as well.⁷ The mixed composition of the personnel, however, did not adversely affect the squadron's performance. It was successfully utilized as a combat unit on the eastern front until 1943 when the Cossack Division was formed.

The 5th Panzer Division also organized a volunteer unit composed mostly of Cossacks. It was simply known as the *Freiwillige Kompanie von Rentlen*. It was organized and led by a translator, Alexander von Rentlen, who was assigned to the division in 1941. Though originally designated as a company-sized unit, it continued to enlist additional members and ultimately had some 300 men



13. Somewhere in Germany, 1943, a column of Cossack soldiers march, wearing their distinctive hats but with German insignia. (Author's collection)

enrolled. It proved very effective in operations such as *Unternehmen Hanover I* which occurred May 24–30, 1942.⁸

Throughout 1941–42 German records indicate numerous examples of Cossack volunteer units being organized all over the eastern front. It is important to remember that since so much of this recruitment was at least in part clandestine, it would require a total review of all German army records to ferret out every individual citation on Cossack volunteers. A case in point is the records of the 43rd Army Corps which included in its 1943 War Diary a section on regulations concerning the use of *Osttruppen*. Buried under the regulations, however, is a status report on the composition and success of *Ost* Company 205 and Cossack Battalion 443. The report on the Cossack battalion is particularly illuminating since it indicates the existence of the battalion since May 1942 and hints at its existence earlier than that date. According to the report, the battalion was composed of four squadrons, all regarded as excellent units and with competent officers. Of significant interest is a brief biographical sketch of the battalion commander and the four

squadron commanders. The battalion commander was German but three squadron commanders were Cossacks and the fourth was from German-Russian stock.⁹ As previously mentioned, like so much information of the *Osttruppen*, this report (and undoubtedly many like it) was buried in the voluminous records compiled by German armies between 1941-45 and is not listed in the indexes to captured German documents.

Occasionally the Germans acknowledged the assistance of their eastern volunteers. As an example, a 1943 issue of *Die Wehrmacht*, the official armed forces magazine, included a major article entitled "Unsere Kosaken", "Our Cossacks". The article featured the Cossacks fighting against the Soviet Army and the Soviet-backed partisans operating in the German rear areas. According to the article, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Tatars and Caucasians were fighting side by side with the German army against the hated Bolsheviks. The nationality that was first in its hatred of the Bolshevik system was the Cossacks. This hatred, according to the author of the article, was still growing, and the volunteers from the Don, Kuban and Terek hosts were eager allies of the German army. The article emphasized the reliability of the Cossacks, their value in fighting the partisans and their unique customs and traditions.¹⁰

Even though the sheer mass of German records during the war years makes it difficult to trace the development of Cossack units, sufficient documentation exists to indicate their widespread use throughout the Russian campaign. Perhaps the most authoritative report available on the numbers of nationalities serving with the *Wehrmacht* was prepared by General Heinz Hellmich, *General der Osttruppen*. According to General Hellmich, by March 1943 there were 430,000 known eastern volunteers serving with the *Wehrmacht*. This number was subdivided as follows:

Eastern battalions (Cossacks etc.)	75,000 men
Turkestan Legion	42,000 men
<i>Hiwis</i>	<u>310,000 men</u>

approximate total 430,000 men¹¹

General Hellmich attempted to give his superiors an actual number of *Osttruppen* serving with the *Wehrmacht* but could only give an approximate number, due to the widespread practice of German commanders not reporting their volunteers. The overall estimate, even though it was not accurate, shows an impressive number of volunteers. It is also significant (and in keeping with

Hitler's beliefs) that the Turkestanis and Cossacks were the only national groups mentioned in the memorandum. With even the *General der Ostruppen* being unable to give accurate figures on the number of Soviet nationalities serving with the German armed forces, the inability of the author to produce more than estimates is acknowledged. Hence, more significant than speculation on number estimates are some of the leaders, both German and Cossack, who emerge in the movement to utilize the Cossacks against the Soviets.

When the 14th Panzer Corps moved into the vicinity of the River Mius, during mid-October 1941, they were surprised to find an engagement in progress behind the Red Army's front line. Thinking that an advance German unit was trapped, they quickly pressed their attack. They found not German troops but a Russian militia unit which had attacked the Soviet Army from the rear. The militia group was commanded by 1st Lieutenant Nicholas Nazarenko.

Nazarenko was a Don Cossack who had a long-standing tradition of opposition to the Soviet regime. He had left Russia as a young child and had been taken to Rumania in the closing phases of the Russian Revolution. As a young man, he served with the Rumanian army and, in the course of his duties, was ordered to return to the Soviet Union to collect information on Soviet troop dispositions along the Russian-Rumanian frontier. The mission was unsuccessful since he was discovered. Nazarenko was wounded, captured and sentenced to a labour camp. He spent several years in camps and ultimately escaped, finally settling in the Caucasus where he worked with an anti-Soviet group.¹²

When the war began in 1941 he and members of his group forged identity papers and headed westward, settling in Taganrog. Here they worked in a factory, biding their time until the war reached that area. With the situation becoming critical for the Soviets, a militia was formed in the factory. Nazarenko, with the help of various citations concerning military experience contained in his forged documents, became company commander with the rank of First Lieutenant. With the German army approaching Taganrog, the militia was sent westward to bolster the weakened Soviet defences. Nazarenko's militia took positions in the vicinity of the River Mius and, with the German army close, they openly became an anti-Soviet force. Most of his militia company was composed of men with whom he had worked in the Caucasus. Thus the transformation of the unit into an anti-Soviet force was not difficult.

Nazarenko's militia was in a second-line position behind the



14. Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, Don Cossack, and Colonel Michael Zaretsky, Kuban Cossack, in Belgrade in 1944. Nazarenko, by this time, had received the German Wound Badge and the Infantry Assault Badge for action on the eastern front. (Author's collection)

Ninth Red Army. They were equipped with infantry small arms before they left Taganrog and when they reached the Mius, they took five artillery pieces from other Soviet units in the area. Realizing the Germans were only a short distance to the west, Nazarenko's force attacked the Soviet Ninth Army from behind in an attempt to break through to the Germans. While they were attacking at the Ninth Army's rear, unknown to them, more Soviet reinforcements were taking positions to their rear, sandwiching them between two hostile forces. It was indeed fortunate that a relief force was sent by the 14th Panzer Corps to relieve what the Germans thought was a beleaguered German unit. Without this fluke, Nazarenko, recognized by the Germans as one of the Cossacks (in the German army) who had fought the Soviets the longest, might have perished.¹³

When the battle between the elements of the Ninth Red Army

and the 14th Panzer Corps ended, the Germans were quite perplexed with their find. The German unit treated this "renegade" Soviet militia in a friendly manner but told them to lay down their arms since the Germans were responsible for concluding the battle against Bolshevism. Nazarenko retorted that he and his men had been fighting Bolsheviks since 1918 and they would continue to do so. Still somewhat confused, the Germans sent Nazarenko and 80 of his men westward to their headquarters where the problem of their future could be resolved. Nazarenko was eventually sent to talk with the Commander of the 14th Panzer Corps, General Gustav von Wietersheim. The general listened sympathetically to his story and his desire to continue his fight against Bolshevism. In the general's opinion, however, German policy would not allow him to permit a full Russian unit to fight openly alongside the German army. Therefore, von Wietersheim proposed that Nazarenko and his men declare themselves *Volkdeutsche*¹⁴ and continue their fight against the Bolsheviks. Needless to say, Nazarenko and his fellow Cossacks were not at all willing to drop their national identity and become "honorary" Germans.

Finally an agreement was struck whereby the Cossacks could retain their identity and receive German uniforms, ammunition and supplies. Nazarenko's unit was called the "Cossack Reconnaissance Battalion" and Nazarenko became the *Abteilungs Führer* or leader of this unit. The basic uniform issued to the battalion was German, but its members all wore a white armband with a large K (for Kosak) printed in black on the armband. Nazarenko himself took his peaked German officer's hat and, while leaving the eagle and swastika intact, removed the red, white and black roundle from the lower oak leaf device, substituting in its place the blue and red cockade of the Don Cossacks. This Cossack unit continued its association with von Wietersheim's Panzer Corps for several weeks and was with the German forces when they moved into Rostov on October 23, 1941. Shortly thereafter, the battalion was transferred to the First Panzer Army.¹⁵

While Nazarenko had one of the longest traditions of active opposition to the Soviet regime, near Mogilev another equally intriguing incident occurred. On August 22, 1941, with the war only two months old, the entire 436th Soviet Regiment defected to the Germans. The defection was led by Major Ivan Nikitch Kononov, a Don Cossack.

Ivan Kononov was forty-one years old and, at least on the surface, a product of the Soviet system. He began his military career in 1920

as an ordinary cavalryman in the 14th Cossack division of Budënný's First Cavalry Army. In 1924 he joined the Komsomol and in 1927 the Communist Party. He continued his military career, progressing in rank during the 1920s. His acceptance into the Frunze Military Academy in 1935 indicated his probable rise to a high position as a general staff officer. Upon completing his training at the Academy, he was assigned to command the 436th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 155th Division. Kononov was still with the regiment when it participated in the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1940. Due to his bravery and leadership in the Finnish War he was awarded the order of the Red Star.¹⁶

This outward evidence of success, however, apparently concealed a very deep-seated hatred of the Soviet system. For example, Kononov's father was a cavalry captain and a soldier for his entire life. The elder Kononov served in the First World War and was seriously wounded in the latter stages of the war. He had returned to his native *stanitsa* when the Bolsheviks arrived, and apparently let it be known that he did not favour their new ideals. As a result, the Bolsheviks hanged Kononov and shot his wife. Eighteen-year-old Ivan never forgot what happened to his parents. He apparently nurtured a hatred for the regime from that time onwards, but followed his aunt's advice and joined the Red Army to disguise his questionable background. With his exemplary military career, Kononov concealed his background exceptionally well.¹⁷

Kononov planned his defection carefully, putting his plan into action not at a time of weakness, but when he was in the middle of a successful counter-attack against the Germans. In the midst of this action, on August 3, 1941, he sent a message to the Germans informing them that he and his regiment would be willing to defect and become the nucleus of a Russian liberation army. The Germans readily accepted the defection of this regiment, though at first they were sceptical since they did not believe an entire regiment would defect. With the German assurances in hand, Kononov assembled his regiment and told them of his intention to build a liberation army. He gave them the choice of staying behind or going with him. The regiment joined him and together they proceeded to the German lines.

The Germans gave Kononov and his regiment a warm reception. He was permitted to discuss his defection and his plans for liberating Russia with General Max von Schenkendorff, Commanding General of Army Group Centre's rear area. Schenkendorff and his staff had already begun to use Russian volunteers out of necessity.¹⁸

Kononov's defection, however, brought about a major infusion of combat-ready Soviet soldiers into Army Group Centre.

Within three weeks of his defection, Kononov had built an enlarged regiment of Russian and Cossack volunteers to fight alongside the Germans. He was permitted to strengthen his regiment by recruiting additional fighting men from prisoner-of-war camps. He and his staff visited the camp near Mogilev on September 1, 1941, and Kononov addressed the prisoners, inviting volunteers for his liberation force. According to all reports the vast majority of the 5,000 prisoners wanted to join his liberation movement.¹⁹ Due to the limitations on the size of his regiment, Kononov only enlisted 405 Cossacks and 137 non-Cossacks, giving a total of 542 men. Through his recruiting efforts, by September 15, 1941 the regiment had reached the strength of 1,799 men, including 1,521 enlisted men, 201 non-commissioned officers and 77 officers.²⁰ After being equipped with horses, small arms and some artillery, the regiment began service as "Detachment 600". It was assigned the duty of guarding roads and railways.

Kononov's assignment was certainly different from the one he had anticipated. From the beginning of his defection, he counted himself as a leader in the movement to liberate the Soviet Union from Bolshevism. In his speech to his men on August 22, 1941, he declared his intention to fight with the Germans against Stalin and against the Communist system.²¹ His approach to General von Schenkendorff was apparently the same, but Kononov quickly learned that he could not immediately lead a liberation army. Instead he took a German promotion from his Soviet rank of major to that of lieutenant-colonel.²² Perhaps, like many Cossacks and Germans, he thought that ultimately wisdom would come to Germany's political leaders and both a political and military solution would be sought in the east.²³

Some recognition of Kononov's role as a leader is evident from a letter sent by a former Tsarist general who also sought to be recognized as a leader in the campaign to free the Cossack territories. General P.N. Krasnov wrote the following to Kononov on December 20, 1941:

Dear Ivan Nikitich: Please accept on behalf of myself and all former Cossack officers and men our sincere greetings. We are all watching with great interest your remarkable achievements in the fight against Communism.

Our quiet Don, Kuban, Terek and Ural are awaiting libera-



15. Colonel Ivan Kononov, as commander of Detachment 600 in early 1943. Kononov is shown here with his adjutant, an old Tsarist officer. (Author's collection)

tion, and for them, as for us, you are our only hope. We can assure you that we are all with you in spirit and wish you personal good health and many future successes.²⁴

General Krasnov, like many other *émigrés* in Europe who were forced from their homeland in the course of the Bolshevik Revolution, watched with great interest as the *Wehrmacht* raced through western Russia in the autumn of 1941. Krasnov was seventy-two and was certainly too old for a major role in the Russian campaign. He was still interested in a leadership position of some sort, however, as later events would show. Krasnov had fostered close ties with the Germans when he was head of the Cossack government in 1918. When the Bolshevik Revolution succeeded, Krasnov fled to Germany and lived in Munich from 1920 to 1923. He then moved to Paris where he remained until 1937, writing and involving himself in *émigré* politics. In 1937 he left Paris, because of concern for his personal safety, apparently due to the activities of the Soviet Secret Police in Paris. From 1937 until the beginning of the eastern

campaign, Krasnov lived in Berlin and continued his writing and his involvement with the *émigré* community.²⁵

While many *émigrés* like Krasnov sought active participation in the campaign against Bolshevism, the German leadership had serious reservations about accepting *émigré* volunteers. With the overall purpose of the campaign being the destruction of the Russian state, the German leadership obviously did not want to enlist in their armed forces large numbers of Russians who sought to create a new Russia. Thus the Germans utilized *émigré* assistance very selectively and with some suspicion. This distrust was so great, according to Strik-Strikfeldt, that a German regulation existed which even forbade the enlistment in the *Wehrmacht* of former Tsarist officers who were of German extraction.²⁶ Consequently, Krasnov and many *émigré* leaders like him, were left to write letters, endorse propaganda pleas and dream of the eventual liberation of Russia.²⁷

Krasnov, together with other *émigrés* with roots in the Tsarist period, had German tolerance but not support for their political activities. With their ties to imperial society they had little if anything to offer the Germans and their proposed new order in a National Socialist Europe. One Cossack leader, however, had a degree of German support, both philosophical and monetary. His name was Vassili Glaskow. Like Nicholas Nazarenko, Glaskow was a Don Cossack whose family had been destroyed in the Bolshevik takeover. As a child Glaskow was taken out of Russia and placed in one of the *émigré* communities in Yugoslavia. After reaching adulthood he attended the cadet school for cavalry instruction at Novkrasnov (a school in Yugoslavia sponsored by *émigrés* under the protection of King Alexander). On completing his studies, he left Yugoslavia to pursue a university education in Czechoslovakia. He studied in Prague at the Polytechnic Institute and ultimately received an engineering degree. Political activities, however, seemed more interesting to Glaskow than his profession, and shortly before the Second World War he became the head of the Cossack Liberation Movement.

Glaskow's movement was never distinguished by its large following. A contemporary Cossack leader estimated the movement's membership at approximately 50 to 60 members, shortly before the outbreak of the war.²⁸ In 1944 the head of Himmler's Secret Police reported its membership as approximately 5,000 members.²⁹ Whatever its actual membership, Glaskow seemed to have German support, at least in some circles.³⁰

Despite his rather limited following, Glaskow had sufficient resources to publish his own newspaper. In the first issue of the *Cossack Messenger*, August 22, 1941, Glaskow printed a proclamation which stated that the Cossack Liberation movement

Entrusts the fate of Cossacks in the hands of the Great World Reformer [Hitler], being convinced that the Führer will give the Cossacks a proper place in a new Europe. . . .

Declares readiness, to put all strength, blood and life at the Führer's disposal, for the holy cause in the struggle against Jewish Bolshevism.³¹

Glaskow seemed determined to outshine the National Socialists in inflammatory journalism. In a speech given at the beginning of the Russian campaign, distinguished only by its blatant anti-Semitism, Glaskow told his followers:

Daybreak of June 22 started as a bright dawn of Cossack freedom and the Cossack's liberation. The Führer of the German people having exhausted all means to maintain peace categorically decided to end the Jewish-Bolshevik plague, to liquidate all dirty political speculations of Moscow's adventurers which, being guided by the eternal Jew, were entering in all kinds of deals and combinations with England's Lords, guided by the same Jewish principles.

Peaceful rebuilding, cooperative efforts of nations, economic rebirth of Europe, including peace, never entered the plans of Jewish Bolsheviks, Jewish capitalists and their accomplices red and white Jews . . .³²

Due to the rabid National Socialist line taken by Glaskow, *Wehrmacht* leaders prevented his organization from contacting the eastern volunteers. Later in the war, when the Cossack Division was in operation, Glaskow's organization regularly sent copies of the КАЗАЧИЙ ВЕСТНИК for the division soldiers. By orders of its German Commander (General Helmuth von Pannwitz) these were never distributed but were instead destroyed upon receipt.³³

While strong and aspiring Cossack leaders emerged during the years 1941-42, there was little likelihood that the Germans would give much if any authority to indigenous personnel, and certainly not to *émigrés*. Therefore, on the Russian front, the *Wehrmacht* continued its practice of utilizing Cossacks in special units, and the liberation force which Kononov sought to head failed to materialize.

However, the Cossacks' reputation for dependability grew within the German Army throughout 1942. By the end of the year the organization section of the *Oberkommando des Heeres*, commanded by von Stauffenberg, had designed a full set of insignia for the Cossacks. These insignia were comparable with German insignia but retained a special identity for the Cossack soldiers. As an illustration, the epaulettes on the Cossack uniform were not significantly different from the German insignia, but the collar tabs were unique. Set in green, the tabs had a red rectangle on the field with white crossed lances superimposed on the red field. Sleeve insignia were designed for Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks, and were to be worn on the left sleeve of the uniform. In addition, a special hat insignia and a blouse insignia were authorized.³⁴ (See p. 100 for an illustration of insignia authorized by the *Wehrmacht*.)

In 1942, increasing numbers of Cossacks were deployed in the German Army. The reasons for the greater deployment in that year are quite simple. The original German advance into Russia (1941) had taken the *Wehrmacht* into the western fringes of Don Cossack territory. Soviet counter-attacks in December of that year, however, temporarily rolled the *Wehrmacht* back from this region. With the summer offensive of 1942 the Germans reversed the fortunes of war, entering and occupying the very heart of the Cossack lands. Before the Soviet offensive against Stalingrad (November, 1942), the swastika flew over the homeland of the Kuban and Don Cossacks. Naturally, with the Germans occupying two of the major host lands, many more Cossack volunteers offered their services to the *Wehrmacht*.

It was Army Group A, under the command of Field Marshal von Weichs, that entered the heartland of the Don and Kuban Cossacks. Lieutenant Colonel Wesel von Freytag-Loringhoven, intelligence officer on von Weichs' staff, recognized the potential of using Cossacks to fight the Soviet government, due to their animosity since the Bolshevik Revolution. With von Weichs' agreement, Freytag-Loringhoven began working with Cossack units which were springing up in the *stanitsas*. The response to his initiative was so positive that Freytag-Loringhoven, working in cooperation with Cossack leaders, assembled all Cossacks who wanted to fight the Soviet government on the grounds of the Soviet armament plant in Voenstroï Sleshchina. Here they were given arms and were organized into military units. In addition, the Cossack volunteers were further supplemented with former prisoners who were selected from German camps by a commission of Cossack officers.

While Freytag-Loringhoven was organizing his Cossack volunteers, other German commanders in Army Group A were organizing Cossack volunteers to assist their depleted forces.³⁵

The initiative of the Cossacks in organizing military formations on their own seems indicative of the desire of many in the *stanitsas* to prevent the return of Soviet rule. Many within the Cossack hosts had never been content with the loss of their special status which they held under the Tsars or the subjugation of their lands by the Soviets. Hence, underground cells, like the one which harboured Nicholas Nazarenko, were active in the Caucasus. When the German army advanced toward this region anti-Soviet activity quickened. For example, in August 1941, a number of former Cossack officers, veterans of the Civil War, formed the Cossack military section in Novochoerkassk. They were well aware of the rapid advance of the German army and knew about the German utilization of Cossack volunteers in the battle against the Soviet army. The military section sought both to appraise the Germans of their activities and to contact the one person whom they thought could best present their views to the Germans, General P.N. Krasnov. Knowing that Krasnov was not on the front lines they sought an intermediary, Lieutenant Nicholas Nazarenko. In February of 1942, Alexander Siusiukin,³⁶ a member of the military section, slipped through the Soviet lines and surrendered to the Germans. At his request Siusiukin was taken to Nicholas Nazarenko. He told Nazarenko about the activities of the Novochoerkassk underground group and their desire to continue fighting the Soviets. Subsequently, Nazarenko assisted Siusiukin in sending a message to Krasnov explaining the work of the section to him. Hence, when the Germans entered the *stanitsas* of the Cossacks in 1942, there were people waiting to assist them.

Novochoerkassk, the Cossack capital, fell to the advancing German army on June 22, 1942. Shortly after its fall, the commander of Army Group South authorized the Cossacks to retain their weapons and form military units to assist the Germans. As a result of this order, the Cossacks of Novochoerkassk created the *Feldstab Don Kosaken* (or Field Staff of the Don Cossacks) as a coordinating group to oversee Cossack military activity. Under the *Feldstab's* direction, self-defence units were created to patrol the region and, with the cooperation of the Germans, self-governing units were established.³⁷

Despite the leadership shown by Cossacks such as Ivan Kononov and Nicholas Nazarenko, the *Wehrmacht* sought to exert its leader-

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945



Source: adapted from a chart authorized by OHK, Abt. II, November 15, 1942

16. Authorized Insignia for Cossack Volunteers

ship over the Cossacks. It did not make use of Cossacks in any major leadership role in commanding large military formations. The eastern front was still a German campaign with the leadership and the preponderance of the military forces German. Nonetheless, the *Wehrmacht* did continue its attempts to utilize the Cossacks, though refusing to use any aspiring political or military leaders from the hosts to spearhead their plans. Instead, they chose a German cavalry officer named Helmuth von Pannwitz. Pannwitz was a highly significant figure in the formation of Cossack units, hence full discussion of his career is warranted.

The second son of Wilhelm von Pannwitz, a district judge who had served in the 14th Hussars, Helmuth von Pannwitz was born in Upper Silesia, where his father leased the royal lands of Botzanowitz and Wichrau. These lands were situated along a small river, the Lisswarthe, which formed the pre-1914 border between Silesia and Russian Poland. This proximity to Poland, a Slavic country, undoubtedly had a significant impact on the formation of the young Helmuth's ideas on Slavic people. Of greater significance was the fact that the Pannwitz estate in Botzanowitz was virtually in sight of the Russian barracks, in Russian Poland, where Cossack soldiers patrolled the Russo-German border. As boys, the three Pannwitz brothers spent a substantial amount of time riding, hunting and swimming in the Lisswarthe. The Cossacks patrolled the Polish border, riding over the low hills and frequently riding down the Lisswarthe where they bathed and watered their horses. The Pannwitz boys were apparently fascinated by these unique cavalrymen and arranged to be on the banks of the little river when the Cossacks were watering their horses.

The Cossacks apparently liked the three Pannwitz boys and frequently talked to them and gave them small gifts. The Pannwitzes watched with a certain fascination as the Cossacks sang songs, accompanied on the *balalaika*, and told traditional stories. On one occasion (supposedly) a Cossack placed Helmuth on a Steppe pony, and the boy rode off at a wild gallop, finally returning from this adventure late in the evening. Helmuth visited the Cossack barracks on several occasions and ate with the soldiers. After the meal, he was treated to the traditional songs and displays of swordsmanship. As a young, impressionable boy, not yet in his teens, these experiences with the Cossacks left an indelible impression on him.³⁸

Helmuth von Pannwitz began his military training as a Wahlstatt cadet at the age of eleven. His schooling took him away from Silesia, but when home for vacations he continued his friendships with the

Cossacks on the other side of the Lisswarthe. In 1914, while he was in the senior cadet programme at Lichterfelde, the outbreak of the First World War in the summer of that year brought a temporary break in his friendship with the Cossack guards.

His rapid advance in the Imperial Army during the war testified to his energy and capabilities. He joined the Emperor Alexander II Uhlán Regiment in Militsch at the age of sixteen, with the rank of Ensign. While still sixteen, he was promoted to Second Lieutenant and by 1917, at the age of eighteen, he became one of the first members of his regiment to win the coveted Iron Cross, First Class for gallantry in action in the Carpathian Mountains. After recovering from wounds received in this action, he served on the staff of General Fritz von Below, and in addition took part in the Isonzo offensive on the Italian front. When the war ended, von Pannwitz returned to Silesia and fought in the *Freikorps* against Polish insurgents in Upper Silesia again receiving wounds in action. He was demobilized on March 10, 1920 and, like so many German soldiers, sought to find a new life in a defeated and impoverished Germany.

Von Pannwitz next spent a year in Hungary and then ultimately drifted back to Silesia and found work not in Germany but in Posen, the former German province which had, through the Treaty of Versailles, become a part of Poland. He remained in Poland until the early 1930s. While in Poland, he became an estate manager for Prince Radziwill on the latter's Mlockow estate near Warsaw. This appointment came because the young von Pannwitz was not only good at his job, but had developed an excellent understanding of the Slavic people and particularly Polish labourers. Apparently, von Pannwitz had developed a strong appreciation for the Slavic people, based on his pre-war friendship with the Cossacks and the adoption of Poland as a second home.

While his associates cite his love for the estate life in Poland, von Pannwitz was by training both a soldier and a German. Sometime between 1933-34 von Pannwitz returned to Germany and rejoined the rapidly expanding German army. He was recommissioned as a cavalry officer on January 1, 1935, joining the 7th Cavalry Regiment at Breslau. He spent the next three years as a captain commanding a squadron of the Second Cavalry Regiment in Angerburg, East Prussia. In this period, General F. W. von Mellenthin describes him as a born leader who had the ability to develop an *esprit de corps* among his men. He also possessed a strong sense of history and tradition, causing him to promote a strong link between the emerg-

ing *Wehrmacht* and the old Imperial army. In fact, he collected uniforms of historic imperial regiments and these were exhibited at the squadron's headquarters.³⁹

The year 1938 saw von Pannwitz promoted to the rank of major, and after the Austrian *Anschluss* he was appointed Squadron Commander of the newly created 11th Cavalry Regiment in Stockerau near Vienna. When the war broke out in 1939 this regiment was at first assigned various observation duties. In the Polish and French campaigns, von Pannwitz worked with a partly motorized divisional reconnaissance battalion of the 45th Infantry Division. His service in the Polish campaign brought him a 1939 clasp to his First World War Iron Cross. When the Russian campaign began in 1941, von Pannwitz was given command of a forward or advance detachment which approached regimental strength. The detachment crossed the River Bug at Brest Litovsk and often led the main German elements by 150 kilometres. His leadership and daring were recognized at the beginning of August by promotion to lieutenant-colonel and the award of the coveted Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross. Only a month later, von Pannwitz was nominated for yet another honour, the Oak Leaves' Clasp to the Knight's Cross.

Before this could be awarded von Pannwitz was transferred to General von Reichenau's Sixth Army. Given the astounding successes of von Pannwitz's unit, someone on von Reichenau's staff concluded that he and his advance detachment could accomplish even greater objectives. He was given a mission, planned by von Reichenau's staff, which, after he had reviewed it, von Pannwitz dubbed a *Himmelfahrtskommando* (a one-way ticket to eternity). Consequently, von Pannwitz told the General's staff that he would only consent to this plan if some member of von Reichenau's staff could clearly show him its significance and, moreover, how it would result in a decisive success for Germany. In essence, he politely and correctly refused the command of such a mission and, as a result, the Oak Leaves' Clasp was not awarded. "Der Pann", as he was called, always showed a strong concern for the welfare of his men. His successes in battle had shown his ability to deliver maximum gains with minimal losses, a formula which was well suited to his way of thinking. His forward detachment was engaged from June 22, 1941 until November, 1941, with only 22 dead. His refusal of a command based on these beliefs required courage and lost him a highly-prized decoration. It was, however, in keeping with his character.

Shortly after this incident, von Pannwitz became ill and could no longer command his mobile troops. After a brief convalescence, he

was transferred on December 1, 1941 to the *Wehrmacht* Headquarters at Lötzen where he was assigned as an adviser to the general commanding German mobile troops. Von Pannwitz served in that capacity from 1941 until late September 1942. While working with the army headquarters, von Pannwitz, on his own initiative, began developing a plan for organizing the various Soviet nationalities into major combat units.⁴⁰ Von Pannwitz had observed volunteer units and had noted that German policy required many Soviets to work as *Hiwis*, driving trucks, working in kitchens and loading and unloading supplies. Many of the proposed combat units found themselves relegated to guard duties and anti-partisan assignments, like those given to Kononov's troops. In von Pannwitz's opinion, Soviet people had to have an active role in the liberation of their country. Hence, his plans called for combat divisions composed of former Soviet citizens and trained under German supervision. Through his various assignments with the High Command, von Pannwitz was aware of the Cossack reconnaissance units serving in the Don, Kuban and Terek regions. He ultimately centred his plans on the Cossacks, due to their excellent reputation and the respect he had developed for them as a young boy.

Von Pannwitz had a genuine love for Slavic people and an understanding of their languages, customs and beliefs. His early experiences with the Cossacks and the years in Poland when he had worked closely with the peasants caused him to ignore the *Untermensch* theories and proceed with his plans to mobilize the former Soviet citizens.

Von Pannwitz's choice of the Cossacks as the specific nationality he hoped to mobilize, was significant for several reasons. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Cossacks had apparently impressed Hitler, because of their tradition as excellent soldiers. Their recruitment was even more feasible in 1942, due to a study released that year by the S.S. Wanssee Institute. This study, entitled *Das Kosakentum*, revealed startling facts about the Cossack hosts. They were neither Russians nor Ukrainians, but an ancient and independent people who were not Slavs.⁴¹ It was through this "discovery" that Stauffenberg and the Organization Section of the *Oberkommando des Heeres* exempted the Cossacks from the ban on the recruitment of Slavic people.⁴²

To further assist his cause, von Pannwitz had two highly placed allies who shared his views. General Kurt Zeitzler, who replaced Franz Halder as the *Wehrmacht*'s Chief of Staff in 1942, firmly supported Pannwitz's scheme to recruit large formations of Cossacks



17. Colonel Helmuth von Pannwitz shown in the official photo announcing his award of the Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross. (Author's collection)

into the German army. On September 20, 1942, Zeitzler ordered von Pannwitz to fly to the Don, Kuban and Terek areas of Russia and develop ties with the hosts. This area had been overrun by Field Marshal Ervin von Kleist's First Panzer Army. Kleist was also a strong supporter of better treatment for Soviet citizens and of the concept of seeking a political solution to the war in the east. With the Caucasus still under military jurisdiction, von Pannwitz was free to work among the hosts and promote his ideas.

He was extremely successful in developing close ties with the Cossack hosts. Perhaps his greatest success was in securing the support of the *Ataman* of the Terek forces, Nicholas Lazarevitch Kulakov. Kulakov would serve with Pannwitz until the end of the war as a superb officer and a dedicated soldier in the battle to defeat the Soviet Army. Before he left the Caucasus, Pannwitz conferred with von Kleist. The Field Marshal told him that he had already

recommended the large scale recruitment of Soviet citizens into the German army and, in addition, he recommended Pannwitz as Commander of Cossack forces. This trip to the Caucasus and the Field Marshal's recommendations should be regarded as the beginning of the Cossack division.⁴³

Von Pannwitz returned to O.K.H. headquarters on October 1, 1942, and reported the success of his mission to General Zeitzler. With Zeitzler's encouragement, von Pannwitz began the task of locating personnel and equipment for the establishment of the Cossack Cavalry Division. At first, there was some resistance by German commanders who did not want to lose their valuable Cossack cavalymen. This was indeed a compliment to the worth and the ability of the Cossacks.

A far greater problem was posed, however, by the continued anti-Slavic attitude of political officials such as *Reichskommissar* Eric Koch and *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann. In the opinion of radical National Socialists like these officials, no Slav would ever be worthy to wear the field grey of the German army. The standing order which forbade the creation of volunteer units larger than battalion size also posed a potential problem for von Pannwitz. While Koch, Bormann and other radical Nazis seemed a significant obstacle, their objections were more than outweighed by the weighty support of Himmler's S.S. With *Das Kosakentum* and Himmler's fascination with ethnic groups like the Cossacks, the von Pannwitz plan had a powerful ally.

Recognizing the threat of the anti-Slavic element and being uncertain of Hitler's reaction to the creation of a full division composed of Cossacks, von Pannwitz and his allies developed a strategy. During the organizational phase, the word Cossack was not officially used with reference to the proposed cavalry formation. Instead, through the organizational phase, the proposed unit was called *Reiterverband Pannwitz*, or Cavalry Task Force Pannwitz. Once the division was organized and recruited its true identity could be revealed.⁴⁴

All of the planning and preparations for the Caucasus and its inhabitants were interrupted by the events of November 1942. The Soviet encirclement of Stalingrad not only trapped the Sixth Army but, in addition, threatened von Kleist's forces in the Caucasus. Von Pannwitz was relieved of his assignment by General Zeitzler and given command of a battle group designed to cover the southern flank of General Hermann Hoth's Panzer Group. When he asked about the location of his battle group, Zeitzler wired "Dic müssen

THE DE-SLAVIZATION OF THE COSSACKS

Sie sich suchen", that is, von Pannwitz had to put the battle group together.⁴⁵

With characteristic energy, von Pannwitz collected some military cooks, replacement personnel and a volunteer cavalry brigade, to a total of 1,000 men. From a tank repair facility he took six tanks and, a short time later, another dozen, giving him a rather unusual but significant force. In a short period of time, von Pannwitz's group wiped out a Soviet cavalry brigade, a Soviet cavalry division and an enemy infantry division. Through his leadership, Hoth's flank had been stabilized.⁴⁶

As a result, von Pannwitz was awarded the long awaited Oak Leaves for his Knight's Cross. On January 15, 1943, he travelled to Berlin to receive his award from the Führer. At the award ceremony Hitler surprised von Pannwitz twice with his memory and knowledge. First, he said, "It's been a long time since Stockerau Pannwitz and we haven't seen you since then." With all of his responsibilities, Hitler still remembered meeting von Pannwitz



18. Cossack volunteers at the front in 1943. All carry Soviet rifles but are wearing German uniforms. The soldier on the left is wearing a First World War German helmet. (Author's collection)

in May 1939, while the latter was assigned to the 11th Cavalry Regiment at Stockerau, Austria. But even more surprising, Hitler asked von Pannwitz, “How are things going with your Cossacks?”⁴⁷ Hitler knew after all. Using Hitler’s comments as a cue, von Pannwitz told him that one of the units which had helped him blunt the Soviet attack was a cavalry unit composed of volunteers. In his own forthright way (a trait which characterized Pannwitz), he told Hitler that the official policies which caused Slavs to be regarded as subhumans and excluded any political future for Russia, were totally wrong. If Germany was to succeed in her attempt to destroy Bolshevism, she simply had to change her policies toward Slavs. Hitler listened politely but without comment and von Pannwitz was dismissed.⁴⁸

This brief audience was highly significant, since it clearly indicated Hitler’s knowledge of von Pannwitz’s activities with the Cossacks. Since the Führer chose to mention the issue, this would seem to indicate at least his tacit approval of the project. Furthermore, his tolerance of von Pannwitz’s polite anti-*Ostpolitik*



19. Whether in Soviet or German uniform the Cossacks always loved to sing and dance. A traditional dance at the front in 1943. (Author’s collection)

THE DE-SLAVIZATION OF THE COSSACKS

comments indicate his respect for the honoured officer. With Hitler's apparent acceptance of von Pannwitz's activities, the creation of a Cossack division seemed imminent.

MIELAU: ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING

The organization of the Cossack Division was unprecedented in the long history of the German Army. The unique character of this institution called for an organization made up of improvisations, which would nevertheless function smoothly after the most widely difficult obstacles had been overcome ... In dealing with these people a man had to learn something new every day or else he was out of place.

(Colonel Alexander von Bosse, 1946)

The events of late 1942, especially the encirclement of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad, brought about a crisis for the German army and its campaign in the east. This crisis, caused by the loss of more than 250,000 men, seemed to strengthen the position of the "Other Germany Group" which pressed for the utilization of former Soviet citizens to defeat the Bolshevik government. In fact, it was in this atmosphere of crisis that the Cossack Cavalry Division came into existence. With Hitler's and Himmler's knowledge and approval, von Pannwitz, with the twice-earned Oak Leaves in his possession, returned to the task of organizing and staffing the Cossack Division.

In agreeing to a Cossack division, Hitler was in fact negating his original instructions to Keitel, Göring and Rosenberg (see pp. 55-6). Through the publication of *Das Kosakentum*, Himmler developed an ideological foundation for switching his position. Other than Hitler's fascination for people with "warrior" and anti-Bolshevik traditions, however, there seems no clear rationale for his approval of a Cossack division. Generally, he tended to be suspicious of Himmler's ideological fantasies (such as *Das Kosakentum*). In the end, the fact that the Cossacks were a Soviet minority with both strong anti-Bolshevik sentiments and sub-

stantial military traditions proved sufficient grounds for a change of position.

It was fortunate that von Pannwitz's endeavour had the backing of Hitler and Himmler. Even with their authorization, *Reichskommissar* for the Ukraine, Eric Koch, did everything within his power to stop the recruitment of the Cossacks. However, with his Commissariat being overrun by the advancing Soviet army, and without the support of his former ally, Himmler, Koch was virtually powerless to stop Cossack recruitment.¹

Given the difficult position of the German army after the Stalingrad disaster, the German military began a withdrawal to a more defensible position, removing the salients in the southern sectors and, in essence, straightening their defensive line. As a part of this process, Army Group A began the evacuation of the entire Cossack region, including the Don, Terek and Kuban regions. This orderly withdrawal was possible due to the German Seventeenth Army's hold on a bridgehead at Temrjuk. Through this bridgehead fled not only the retreating Army Group A, but thousands of Cossacks, many with their wives and children, leaving their ancestral homes rather than remaining under Soviet rule.

Since the German army was moving westward, and with it untold numbers of refugees, von Pannwitz sent *Rittmeister* (Captain) D.R. Lehmann, a very capable officer from *Reiterverband Pannwitz*, to Cherson (in the Ukraine) to establish a central collecting point for Cossack volunteers. With Lehmann positioned there, on January 22, 1943 Pannwitz flew to Temrjuk, a city near the bridgehead, and proceeded to the nearby headquarters of Army Group A. Here, he met an old comrade from the 11th Cavalry Regiment at Stockerau, Austria, Major Hans Joachim von Schultz. Schultz was to become von Pannwitz's Ia (Chief of Staff) and would be extremely helpful in the formation of the Cossack Division.²

It seemed, however, that fate sought to prevent the immediate formation of the division. First there was the delay caused by the Stalingrad disaster, when von Pannwitz was assigned to command the taskforce covering Hoth's flank. Then, late in January of 1943, as he sought to discuss the division's formation with General von Kleist, the latter assigned him temporarily to another crisis situation: the defence of the Crimean city, Feodosia. The Soviet army had attempted an amphibious landing there, and Kleist had reason to expect that another attempt would be made. From the German point of view, Feodosia was a crucial city since German defences for the Crimea were focused on the extreme eastern tip of



20. Cossack soldiers in 1943, somewhere on the eastern front. The man on the left has apparently just defected or been captured since he still wears a Soviet uniform without German or Cossack insignia. (Author's collection)

the Crimea. If the Soviet army could successfully land forces at Feodosia, they would be approximately 60 miles behind the German defensive position. Not surprisingly, Kleist wished to select as commander a man with a reputation of getting things done. Von Pannwitz was an obvious choice.

With characteristic energy and efficiency, von Pannwitz, together with Major von Schultz, built up the defences of Feodosia, thus minimizing the dangers of a Russian attack. The position was so secure by March 1943, that he sent Major von Schultz to Lötzen, the *Wehrmacht* headquarters, to press for the organization of the Cossack Division.

Schultz's trip was of the greatest significance for it resulted in real progress toward the Cossack Division. At Lötzen, he spoke with *General der Osttruppen*, Lieutenant-General Heinz Helmich and Colonel Freiherr Wessel von Freytag-Loringhoven. Both agreed with the necessity of initiating von Pannwitz's plan, which was to move the available Cossack units westward and immediately begin to organize and train the 1st Cossack Division. With an agreement



21. January 1943: as the German army withdrew from the Caucasus volunteers from the nationalities continued to fight the Bolsheviks. Note the Cossack on the right. (Author's collection)

reached, Schultz rushed back to the eastern front to resolve another problem. One of Eric Koch's subordinates, an obscure *Gebietskommissar*, decided that while he would permit the Cossack soldiers to collect in Kherson in preparation for their trek westward, their families would have to remain in Kherson and work on building streets and roads. Needless to say, this did not improve the morale of the volunteers. However, Major von Schultz quickly overrode this absurd decision and continued the collection of Cossacks in Kherson.³

The division's official recognition finally became a reality in April of 1943. Von Pannwitz was released from the area command of Feodosia on April 6, 1943, and immediately left for Lötzen, headquarters of the High Command. Arriving there, he received the High Command's decision: Mielau (Mława), East Prussia would be the training area for the Cossack Division. A former Polish city, Mielau was the site of an old Polish army camp, easily convertible to a training site for the Cossacks.⁴ All that remained was an order from

the High Command officially recognizing the division. The long-awaited recognition came on April 23, 1943.⁵ Von Pannwitz's dream had become a reality.

For the next six weeks the major task of the German cadre was the transportation of the Cossacks and the German staff from all over the eastern front to Mielau. The Führer's headquarters, strongly in favour of the proposed division, apparently expedited this effort in many ways. For example, the chief of the *Wehrmacht's* personnel office ordered that the necessary officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men who were specialists in Soviet languages, be transferred to the Cossack Division. The inspector for volunteer units of the eastern people had all Cossack units under his jurisdiction transferred to the Cossack Division. General Gehlen, as Chief of the Foreign Armies' East Section was also extremely helpful in the process of planning the activation, arming and training of the division.⁶

Through the actions of the above-mentioned offices and officials, men and equipment began to pour into Mielau. Lieutenant-Colonel Freiherr von Wolff's Cossack section, previously assigned to the Poltava area, was now assigned to the Cossack Division. From the Kiev vicinity the Cossack regiment commanded by Joachim von Jungschulz was added to the division. Army Group Centre released the prized Cossack Detachment 600, commanded by Ivan Kononov. First Lieutenant Nicholas Nazarenko brought his Cossack unit, composed of over 500 men, which he had gathered in the trek from Rostov to Cherson. *Ataman* Nicholas Kulakov arrived in Cherson with his Terek Cossack unit, which had already been fighting under German direction, to join the division. At the collection point, Cherson, roughly 10,000-15,000 Cossack soldiers were assembled.⁷ *Reiterverband von Pannwitz*, the intended nucleus of the division, did not receive marching orders until May 12, 1943. According to the records of Army Group A, the *Reiterverband* had reached the strength of 760 Cossacks by the time it received its marching orders.⁸

The existing volunteer legions were only one source of manpower for the newly authorized division. As the division was forming at Mielau, the German cadre began a search of the prisoner-of-war camps, looking for additional Cossacks for the division. Apparently the mere claim to Cossack identity was not sufficient to gain membership in the Cossack Division. For example, the early records of the Cossack Division show résumés of interrogations of potential recruits from POW camps. Interrogations were con-

ducted by experienced interpreters who probed the prospective volunteer's background in detail.⁹ At Mielau, a commission was formed to check the origins of the Cossacks who were arriving from the various commands on the eastern front.¹⁰

While Mielau was the designated mustering area for the Cossack Division, as the Cossacks moved westward from their homelands they brought with them their wives, children and many other relatives. This necessitated the establishment of another camp 20 kilometres away at Mochowo. This facility became a multi-purpose camp for both the Cossacks and the Germans. It was not merely a holding facility for wives and children, but also the base for the Fifth Training and Replacement Regiment, established to continue the process of feeding replacements to the division.¹¹ Colonel Alexander von Bosse, a Baltic German and former commander of the 111th Panzer Grenadier Regiment,¹² was given command of the training and replacement regiment. The camp was, in addition, the home for a squadron of under-age Cossacks, a sort of cadet corps. These young boys ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen desired to participate in the campaign against Bolshevism, but were too young. The cadet corps permitted them to receive some preparatory military training without actually joining the division. General von Pannwitz was quite pleased with this corps of young Cossacks and took a particular liking to a young Cossack named Boris. Since Boris's parents were dead, von Pannwitz took a personal interest in the boy, hoping to adopt him when the war was over.¹³

One notable departure from German policy was the extensive utilization of *émigrés* and Tsarist officers from all over German-occupied Europe. As stated earlier, a total prohibition on the recruitment of Russian *émigrés* was not imposed by the *Wehrmacht*, but the Germans were very hesitant in using this group. The desire to utilize all available resources to build the Cossack Division caused this hesitancy to disappear and the Germans were soon accepting Cossack *émigrés* from Yugoslavia, France, Germany and Czechoslovakia. A number of these *émigrés* had excellent military backgrounds. When forced to flee from the Soviet Union between 1919 and 1921, some of the former Tsarist soldiers served with the Yugoslavian, Bulgarian or Hungarian armies. It was not uncommon for the younger *émigrés*, wanting to follow the traditional Cossack military career, to go to military school in Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. A few even attended the prestigious *Ecole Militaire* in Paris.¹⁴ Used as they were in various command positions within the division, the *émigré* officers were somewhat restricted since they

were not eligible for the position of *Ataman*. According to General von Pannwitz's plan, each of the division's regiments was assigned an *Ataman*. To qualify as an *Ataman*, an officer was required to have served as a Cossack officer in the Tsarist period. Within the regiment, an *Ataman* held the rank of Major and wore the traditional Cossack uniform and Tsarist-type epaulettes.¹⁵

One special group within the division was the general's body-guard. Sensitive to the customs and traditions of the Cossacks, von Pannwitz created his own praetorians composed of Cossacks who had previously served with the Tsarist army. Like the *Ataman* officers, the *konvoi* of the general all wore traditional Cossack uniforms.¹⁶ According to one German officer, they distinguished themselves by their exemplary military conduct and their total devotion to the division commander, Helmuth von Pannwitz.¹⁷

Two of the former Tsarist officers who served as *Atamans* in the division deserve special mention. Nicholas Kulakov was a living legend among the Cossack hosts. He had begun his military career as a cavalryman in the first Volga regiment in 1910. He rose to the rank of captain, but the Russian Revolution cut short a promising career in the Tsarist cavalry. During the Civil War, he fought in the Caucasus against the Red forces and in early 1920 was wounded in both legs by grenade fragments. He was taken to a hospital in the bitter cold, a journey in an open wagon which lasted an entire day. By the time he reached the hospital both legs were severely frost-bitten and had to be amputated. More dead than alive, he was taken back to his home *stanitsa* by his wife. Recognizing that the Red forces would come for him, Kulakov's wife concealed him in a hastily-dug cellar under the house. When the secret police came, she informed them of her husband's death, due to his serious wounds. Thus began Kulakov's long period of isolation.

For 20 years Kulakov lived in hiding under his house. During the lengthy hours of his entombment, he carved a set of wooden legs and waited for the time to come when he could literally come back from the dead. When the Germans overran the Don, Kuban and Terek regions (1942) Kulakov emerged from hiding and driving from *stanitsa* to *stanitsa* in his *matroika* (three-horse carriage) he called for his fellow Terek Cossacks to join him in organizing units to fight the Red Army. As mentioned before, von Pannwitz's coup of gaining Kulakov's confidence in the autumn of 1942 was of immeasurable importance. The respect which Kulakov commanded and the leadership he exerted within the hosts was extremely

important for von Pannwitz's goal, a strong combat-ready Cossack division.¹⁸

In his own way, *Ataman* Sergei Pavlov had also returned from the dead. Pavlov, a Don Cossack, began his military career in 1914 after completing training in the Don Cadet Corp School and the Nikolaevsky Cavalry School in 1914. As a second lieutenant he was sent to the front, where he, like so many other Cossacks, distinguished himself by his bravery. Being a man of foresight, he recognized the significance of airpower and volunteered for flight training in 1916. Pavlov completed flight training, but his plans for active duty as a pilot were interrupted by the Revolution of 1917. The Revolution caused him to return home and work to defend the Don against the Bolsheviks. As an airforce did not exist, he commanded several armoured trains which harassed the Soviet rear areas.

Ultimately, a Don Airforce was formed and Pavlov became a pilot in the Second Don Squadron, serving in that capacity until the Don was overrun by the victorious Bolsheviks. Like thousands of other Cossacks, he took refuge in the Crimea but, when it too was overrun, he returned to the Kuban with forged identity papers which indicated he was a demobilized Red Army soldier. He lived in fear of discovery and for a brief period was afraid to apply to work since he was certain any investigation of his papers would uncover his background. With the assistance of some friendly professors he enrolled at a technical college and graduated with a degree as a construction engineer. He maintained this identity until the Germans arrived in the Kuban. With their arrival, he returned to his original goal of liberating the Don and Kuban from the Bolsheviks.¹⁹

Pavlov was active in forming a regiment of Don Cossack volunteers and a training company, shortly after the Germans overran the Don. His men were armed with rifles and equipment left behind by the retreating Soviet army rather than equipment issued by the Germans. He was an acknowledged leader in the movement to organize Cossack forces throughout the last half of 1942.²⁰ Von Pannwitz's use of men like Kulakov and Pavlov for *Ataman* is indicative of his perception of and insight into the Cossacks and their leaders.

Von Pannwitz also made every attempt to employ *Wehrmacht* soldiers who understood the feelings and aspirations of the Cossacks. Since the division was a cavalry unit, the German cadre had to come from German cavalry units. Most of the cadre was drawn from the 11th Cavalry Replacement Regiment, garrisoned at Stockerau

near the city of Vienna. The 11th Cavalry was von Pannwitz's pre-war assignment, and it is likely that he was responsible for the selection of this regiment. According to one surviving officer some of the German cadre members were not cavalry officers but were Baltic Germans, chosen because of their experience with Slavic people and their knowledge of the language.²¹ The actual cavalry cadre, however, was composed of primarily Austrian cavalry personnel. According to Colonel Alexander von Bosse (a Baltic German) the selection of Austrians as a cadre was significant since the Austrians tended to be more flexible and adaptable than *Wehrmacht* personnel trained within the "Prussian" military tradition. This adaptability was very important because, according to the guidelines developed by von Pannwitz, the Cossacks would not be required to live according to German standards but rather the German cadre would have to adjust to the Cossacks.

The tact and diplomacy required in dealing with the diverse Cossack elements was extremely important. As one officer stated: "In dealing with these people a man had to learn something new every day or else he was out of place. Men who arrived without any preconceived opinions always had to keep their minds open for new impressions and new views."²² Major von Kalben expressed a similar view, citing the diplomacy required due to the mixed composition of the division. There were Siberian, Kuban, Terek and Don Cossacks, entirely different hosts to command. As already mentioned, there were also two somewhat diverse groups, the Cossacks who had recently seen service in the Soviet army and the *émigrés*, drawn from all over Europe. Some *émigrés* had served in other European armies after the Revolution, while others had had no military experience since 1920. The German cadre, however, had to treat all of these men diplomatically, as equal soldiers in the fight against Bolshevism, even though some were no longer able to fight in a modern war.²³

To further add to the division's mixed background, von Pannwitz inherited a number of German officers who were neither Baltic Germans nor cavalymen. Instead, they were *Wehrmacht* officers who, on their own initiative or by order of their commanders, had begun using Cossacks early in the eastern campaign. To this category belonged soldiers like Captain Jungschulz and Captain Lehmann, both of whom had Cossack units in the Army Group South region.

The entire German political and military apparatus was showing some flexibility in its policies toward the Cossacks who were -



22. The Cossacks have always been known for their skills as horsemen. In this 1943 German photo a young Cossack is shown performing the *djigitovka*, tricks or stunts performed by the trained riders. (Author's collection)

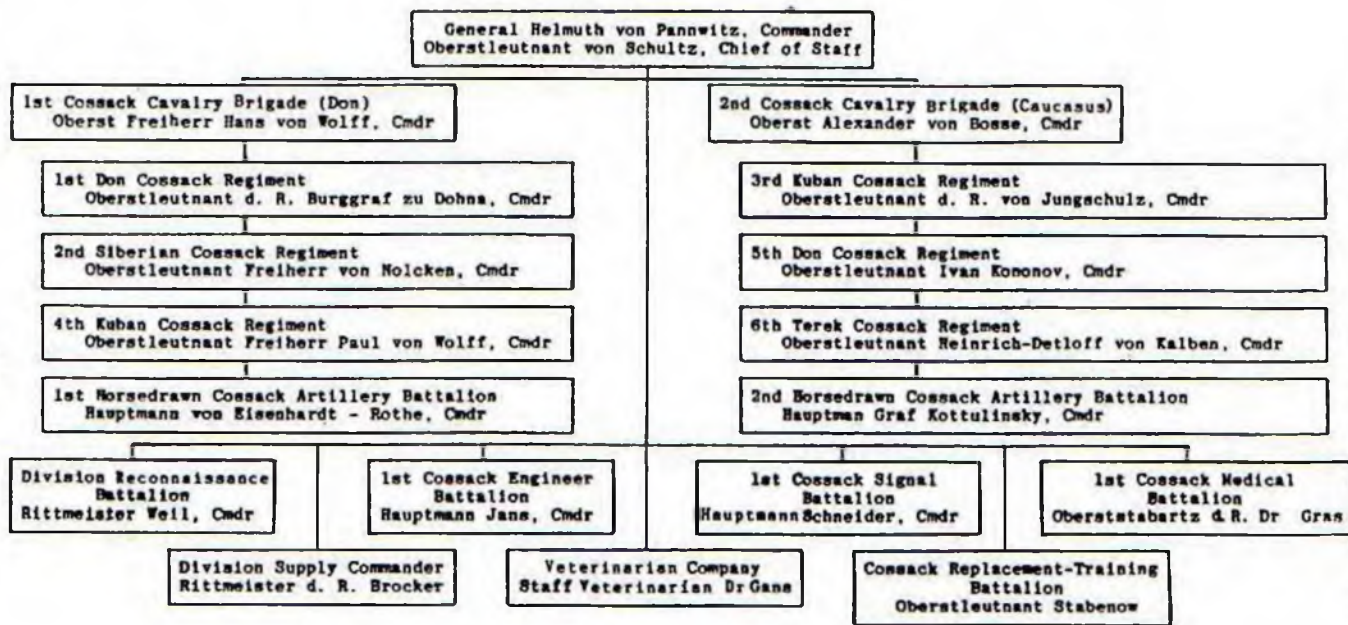
despite occasional Nazi propaganda to the contrary — obviously a Slavic people. That difficulties still existed, however, was demonstrated by an incident in mid-summer of 1943. Nicholas Nazarenko, now a captain in the Cossack Division, met and fell in love with a German woman who lived near Mielau. The couple spent a considerable amount of time together, which was apparently noted by someone who took National Socialist teachings very seriously. The woman was reported to the Nazi political apparatus and arrested. She was charged with fraternizing with a Slav, an act considered a crime in German-occupied Poland. Nazarenko complained bitterly, since by this time he had been fighting with the

Germans for almost two years and was a decorated veteran. He carried his appeal to General von Pannwitz who suggested the best solution to the problem was for Nazarenko to marry the woman. Since Nazarenko thought this was unwise von Pannwitz used his influence to have the woman released and Nazarenko ended the relationship on his own, due to the inherent problems of a Slav-German romance.²⁴ This incident, though minor, is indicative of the continued attitude of the Nazi Party toward Slavic people.

Despite such minor annoyances, the Cossack Division continued to organize the train. The chart on p.121 indicates the basic structure of the 1st Cossack Division. A cursory review of the chart indicates that all regimental commands except the 5th Don Cossack Regiment were under German officers. These German officers were placed in major command positions by General von Pannwitz. The General called all the division's Cossack officers together for a staff meeting on May 3, 1943. The Cossacks were at this time introduced to the German officers who would hold the major commands in five of the six major regiments and in the separate detachments and battalions. Von Pannwitz, at his diplomatic best, carefully explained that the assignment of German officers to the major commands was temporary. He indicated his intent, as soon as possible, to send a select number of Cossack officers to the German Cavalry School for training. The first step, however, was for all Cossacks to complete a full German basic training. Above all, von Pannwitz emphasized that his overall goal was to make the 1st Cossack Division a first rate cavalry division, second to none.²⁵

Again, only one Cossack officer retained a major command, Colonel Ivan Kononov. The records give no clue to the rationale for this one exception by General von Pannwitz. It is probable, however, that since Kononov had an excellent education at the Frunze Military Academy in 1935 and had been a regimental commander since his attendance at the academy, it was only logical to leave him in a major command position.²⁶

According to Major von Kalben, Commander of the 6th Terek Regiment, the training, arming and equipping of the Cossack Division was based on the enlargement of the East Prussian Cavalry brigade into the 1st Cavalry Division in 1940.²⁷ It was necessary, however, to tailor both the organization and training of the Cossack Division to the uniqueness of the unit. Thus, the actual combat regiments were organized according to geographical background to include two regiments of Kuban Cossacks, two of Don Cossacks, one regiment of Siberian Cossacks and one regiment of Terek



Source: Kern, *General Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 189-90.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE 1ST COSSACK CAVALRY DIVISION: SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1943

Cossacks. The six regiments in turn constituted a total of two brigades. The 1st Brigade was composed of two Don regiments and the Siberian regiment. The 2nd Brigade consisted of the two Kuban regiments and the Terek regiment. The 1st Brigade was commanded by Colonel Hans Freiherr von Wolff and the 2nd by Colonel Alexander von Bosse.²⁸

The organization of the regiments into host units was in itself a unique innovation by the *Wehrmacht*. Even more unique was the promotion of a mixture of German and Cossack uniforms and accoutrements by the German commanders. The basic uniform was the German field grey blouse and trousers, much like any regulation cavalry regiment. The trousers, however, had stripes the length of the outside seam and the stripes were traditional colours of the Cossack hosts.²⁹ The standard issue German helmet was authorized in addition to the regulation German garrison cap. Uniquely, however, the Don and Siberian Cossacks were allowed, even encouraged to wear the *papacha*, the traditional Cossack lambs-wool hat, and the Kuban and Terek Cossacks, the *kubanka*, the shorter lambswool hat.³⁰ In some instances complete German insignia were utilized for the hats while other Cossacks wore only the *Wehrmacht*'s eagle and swastika device and substituted a traditional Cossack cockade in place of the German.³¹

Some of the soldiers, both German and Cossack, for ceremonial occasions wore the Cossack overgarment, the *cherkesska*. It was worn in the traditional style, complete with the decorative cartridge-holders in front. When von Pannwitz received his promotion to the rank of major-general, on June 1, 1943, he came before the Cossacks in the full traditional uniform of a Cossack general. He wore this uniform for parade occasions for the remainder of the war. In addition to the *cherkesska*, the Cossacks and German cadre wore the traditional *bashlyk*, a large distinctive hood, which was worn on the back when not in use. As part of their uniform, the Cossacks from the Caucasus wore the *burka* in preference to the German-style overcoat. The *burka* was a fur or heavy cloth cape which covered the rider and the back of the horse.³²

The uniforming of the Cossack Division is of great significance since it shows that von Pannwitz recognized the need to appeal to the customs and traditions of the Cossacks. He did not intend to make Germans out of the Cossack soldiers. Instead, he was working with Cossacks in field grey, men whose military traditions he knew and respected. Therefore, unique pieces of uniforms and equipment from their military past were retained to promote their special identity.

While the main fighting regiments with the *voiska* affiliation have been discussed, the total division included other combat-oriented organizations which should be recognized. Among these organizations were:

The 55th Reconnaissance Battalion, one of the few units within the division composed entirely of German soldiers.

The 55th Artillery Regiment (horse-drawn) consisting of a total of six batteries and organized into two battalions.

The 55th Engineer Battalion consisting of four companies.

The 55th Signal Battalion composed entirely of German soldiers.

The 55th Supply section composed of two motorized and three horse-drawn columns.

The 55th Medical Battalion.

The Veterinary Company.³³

In order to better understand the size of the division as organized, the regular mounted regiment had an assigned staff of four to five officers and twelve enlisted men. Also assigned was a communication section of approximately 70 men and an anti-tank squadron (the 9th squadron). Each mounted regiment was divided into two battalions with four squadrons in each. The overall strength of a mounted Cossack regiment was roughly 2,000 men with a German cadre of approximately 150 men.³⁴

Von Pannwitz was concerned not only with developing a strong combat-ready division, but also with creating cultural units which would promote the traditions of the hosts within the division. With this goal in mind, the division staff had a cultural and propaganda platoon consisting of a total of three sections. This platoon was responsible for editing and publishing a weekly paper entitled *Kasatschi Klitsch (The Cossack Call)*. A special service group worked with new recruits and gave basic political orientation and lectures on Bolshevism and its evils.³⁵

This desire to promote the customs and traditions of the Cossacks continued throughout the war. While the division was engaged in Yugoslavia, von Pannwitz rescued the Cossack museum in Belgrade (in the latter part of 1944) and guaranteed the safety of this irreplaceable collection. In early 1945 he made arrangements for it to be shipped from the combat zone to the comparative safety of Germany. Lacking trucks, he managed to secure the assistance of the S.S., and on February 12, 1945, the museum was safely transferred to the interior of Germany.³⁶

Von Pannwitz showed a good deal of wisdom with this appeal to the past in order to build a strong unified fighting unit. While most of the fighting men were Cossacks the diversity within the division was immense. Language in itself was a barrier. Both brigade commanders and two of the regimental commanders were Baltic Germans and spoke Russian fluently. Some of the German cadre were able to speak Russian but others only possessed a slight knowledge of the language. Hence, as training began, interpreters had to be used in order to translate the German commands and lectures into Russian. Kononov's regiment needed reverse interpreters since it was virtually all Russian and needed interpreters to translate the ideas and concepts of the Cossack officers to their German peers. Orders at the staff, brigade and regimental level were issued in both Russian and German but since the troop commanders were Cossacks, all orders on that level were in Russian.³⁷

Another level of confusion was provided by Red Army agents who joined the divisions to carry out subversive activities. Recognizing the existence of this problem a special unit was organized, and commanded by a former Bolshevik commissar to ferret out "Red" agents. This political officer stationed agents in the various regiments for the express purpose of exposing the subversives. Any subversive elements discovered were sent to a special *stalag* (prisoner camp) and were subsequently shot. Among those discovered was one of the Orthodox bishops attached to the division.³⁸

One recognized element which provided a strong tie to the old traditions was religion. Though a Protestant, von Pannwitz was intrigued by the beliefs and rites of the Eastern Orthodox Church. That religion was still of significance to some Cossacks is indicated by the fact that one recruit was a monk from Mount Athos, who came to Mielau wearing around his neck a small bag of earth from the Holy Land. This he promptly presented to von Pannwitz.³⁹ Von Pannwitz assigned an Eastern Orthodox chaplain to every Cossack regiment. The *émigré* community in Belgrade gave the division a portable field altar permitting the regular scheduling of masses. To complement the mass, the regiments had male choirs which excelled in singing the old traditional hymns. Attendance at these masses was not compulsory but was surprisingly high.⁴⁰ According to *Wehrmacht* policy, German personnel were forbidden to attend, but von Pannwitz encouraged German attendance despite the ban.⁴¹

Custom and tradition, while important, did not interfere with the

most important task – the training of a combat-ready division. Like any combat unit, marksmanship was of great importance. At Mielau the Cossack troops were issued German weapons for the first time.⁴² With this issue came instruction on marksmanship, which was necessary owing to the tendency of the Cossacks to jerk the trigger and hence miss the target. With proper individual training they became excellent marksmen.⁴³

For instruction in basic tactics, the age-old device – the sand table – was used, with appropriately sculptured terrain. The Cossacks amazed their German trainers with their skills in the art of camouflage and their ingenious ideas on ambushing enemy forces.⁴⁴

During these field exercises the division was scheduled for a multitude of activities which would permit accurate battlefield simulation for all elements. The Pioneer (engineer) units were required to build bridges and use demolition charges. The Artillery Battalion engaged in live firing at both stationary and moving targets. The Signal Battalion established and maintained contact with all units by both telephone and radio contact, including the highly mobile reconnaissance units. A fully organized field training welded the various regiments together into the strong division which von Pannwitz sought.⁴⁵

The first major opportunity for the Cossack Division to exhibit its unity occurred in the early autumn of 1943 with the visit of the aging General P.N. Krasnov. Resplendent in his full Tsarist general's uniform, Krasnov entered the camp at Mielau and was greeted by General von Pannwitz. Von Pannwitz's *konvoi* were placed at the visiting general's disposal as bodyguards. Accompanied by the *konvoi* and by von Pannwitz, Krasnov rode past the Cossack division on parade, viewing the soldiers with their distinctive uniforms topped by the *papacha* or *kubanka*. Present as well were the Cossack trumpeteers, a bugle corps which played the old traditional Cossack marches. To crown the entire affair, the division priest came forward and, after the generals had knelt before the crucifix, gave his blessing on the assembled division. The old general was so impressed and so moved that he could hardly speak. It was obvious to all that the unified Cossack Division was a reality.⁴⁶

By September the division was in a combat-ready state. While the *Wehrmacht's* Chief of Staff, General Zeitzler, had supported the formation of the Cossack division and had allowed a full training sequence for the division on September 12, 1943, Zeitzler sent the following message to the Cossack Division: "I can no longer afford to let a complete division remain inactive. Report immediately

your readiness to depart by 15 September. Further orders will follow."⁴⁷

Thus, on September 17, 1943 the division began to entrain for its combat assignment, Yugoslavia.⁴⁸

The assignment of the Cossack Division to Yugoslavia seems highly unusual, particularly if one considers the desire of the division's soldiers to liberate their homeland from the Soviets. The division's assignment to Yugoslavia was logical, given the prevailing conditions facing the Germans. German forces had occupied Yugoslavia since April of 1941. In the period that elapsed between 1941 and 1943 a powerful partisan group led by Josef Broz (Tito) and supplied by the British and Americans had developed. By mid-1943, the partisans seriously threatened the German units stationed in Yugoslavia. Tito had mustered some 220,000 men in 26 partisan divisions – a threat the Germans could not afford to overlook.⁴⁹ Thus the German High Command turned to a group of soldiers that had repeatedly proved themselves in anti-partisan/anti-guerilla warfare – the Cossacks. Since the enemy was Marxist, and was certainly on the fighting route in a return trip to the Ukraine and Cossackia, it was logical that the Cossack Division should be assigned to Yugoslavia.

Since sending the Cossacks to Yugoslavia rather than to the Soviet Union was a politically sensitive decision, von Pannwitz assembled the Cossacks and addressed them concerning their first combat assignment. He explained carefully the necessity of stopping the Bolshevik menace in Yugoslavia, a country where the threat of Communism was very serious. He concluded his talk by saying: "Our hour has struck. We are fighting to destroy Communism for Cossack freedom."⁵⁰ Following this speech the Cossack Division prepared to move south into Yugoslavia. Regrettably, from the Cossack point of view, the reserve regiment, the families, and the young Cossack cadets would be left behind. Von Pannwitz promised the reserve regiment that it would soon join his force. In addition, he promised the older cadets their orders to move south within a year. The farewells accomplished, on September 17, 1943 the Cossacks began to move south.

SELF-GOVERNMENT FOR SOVIET NATIONALITIES – A *WEHRMACHT* INITIATIVE

The experimental self-governing region in the Kuban Cossack area serves as a starting point for the entire Cossack problem.

(Major O.W. Müller, 1944)

As the German army was gathering able-bodied Cossacks at Miellau, training them as the First Cossack Division and shipping them by rail to fight the Bolsheviks in Yugoslavia, another part of the *Wehrmacht*'s emerging policy toward Soviet nationalities should be examined. First at Kamenets Podolsk on the Polish Ukrainian border and later at Novogradok (Belorussia) there existed a Cossack self-governing region, operated under German protection. This self-governing area was a mere shadow of what the *Wehrmacht* had hoped to establish in the Don or Kuban regions, had it not been for the military disasters of 1942–43 on the eastern front. In this region, the Cossacks elected their own leaders, established schools, and developed military units, all under their own administration.¹

Hitler, in his preliminary instructions for Operation Barbarossa had assigned the civilian administration of the occupied eastern territories to Rosenberg's *Ostministerium*, while reserving some powers for the S.S. and for Göring's four-year economic plan.² The fact remains, however, that some areas of the eastern front never were turned over to "civilian" administration because they remained too close to the front lines. For example, the Caucasus, overrun by the Germans in late 1942, was always close to the front. The Leningrad area was a combat zone for over two years and was never controlled by the *Ostministerium*. In short, large areas of

the eastern front were under the administration of the German *Wehrmacht* and it was through their initiatives that the first self-governing regions were established.

The establishment of the self-governing region at Kamenets Podolsk in 1943 was not a totally unprecedented move on the part of the *Wehrmacht* nor was it an act of desperation by a defeated army. Self-government had its origins in the years 1941-43 when the *Wehrmacht* was victorious on the eastern front. The first documented case of the German army establishing an independent self-governing area occurred in the autumn of 1941, as the German army was pushing its victorious advance into the Soviet Union. In the town of Lokoty on the eastern edge of the Bryansk forest, General Rudolf Schmidt, commander of the 2nd Panzer Army, placed a former Soviet official, Bronislav Kaminsky, in charge of the region. Among the tasks to be accomplished by Kaminsky was the pacification of the area, which was plagued by partisans, and the development of it into a secure area in the *Wehrmacht's* rear.³

Kaminsky organized anti-partisan units, and the area was soon under his control with the partisans no longer a major threat. General Schmidt was so pleased with the progress in Lokoty that he placed additional *rayons*⁴ under Kaminsky's control, creating a self-governing region with all executive authority in the hands of Kaminsky, a former camp inmate. Through the position given by Schmidt, Kaminsky was both civilian and military administrator of the region. Due to the military responsibilities, he was given the rank of Brigadier General and was allowed to establish a small army in the Lokoty district called the Russian People's Army of Liberation (RONA). His military force was large enough that it had an artillery section and some captured Soviet T-34 tanks. The army, as organized by Kaminsky, was never larger than a German division,⁵ but was effective in its role – the pacification of the Lokoty region.

With both civilian and military powers given to him by the *Wehrmacht*, Kaminsky also developed a political movement. This was a mixture of National Socialism, Russian and Soviet political theory, together with some of Kaminsky's own philosophy. So effective was Kaminsky's district that General Schmidt believed that districts and military units like Kaminsky's could be used as a basis for the defeat of the Soviet Union.⁶

At the same time, during the autumn of 1941, another self-governing region was established in the Ukraine, centring around the Ukrainian city of Zhitomir, but for some unknown reason this

was quickly terminated.⁷ These examples cited, in addition to many other documented instances where the *Wehrmacht* delegated the local governance of former Soviet communities to local leadership, indicate its willingness to utilize the citizenry for the governance of small regions. Ultimately the most enduring examples of self-government in the occupied eastern territories were the self-governing regions of the Cossacks.

The immediate precedent for the Kamenets-Novogradok self-governing Cossack region was an experiment authorized in the Kuban in 1942. As the German army overran the Don and Kuban Cossack territories (in autumn, 1942) the reception given to the advancing German army was quite friendly. Furthermore, prior to the German occupation, the Cossacks had organized themselves militarily to assist the German army in driving out the Soviets. Given this show of anti-Soviet sentiment, Army Group A sought permission from General Eduard Wagner, the army's Quartermaster-General, to establish a self-governing region in the Kuban. Wagner, who was a close associate of Claus von Stauffenberg (who had consistently lobbied for a major change in Germany's eastern policies) granted the permission for the *Oberkommando des Heeres*.⁸

The self-governing region was authorized by the *Wehrmacht* on October 1, 1942. It consisted of a total of six former Soviet *rayons* and a population of approximately 160,000 people. The governing structure, established by the Germans, was well organized and was structured according to traditional Cossack institutions. The base governmental unit was the *stanitsa*, which had at its head an *Ataman*. The next level of administration was the *rayon*, again administered by an *Ataman*, with the government structure culminating with the regional *Ataman*, responsible for all six *rayons*. In addition, every *Ataman* by the German design had a council of elders, drawn from the *stanitsa*, the *rayon* or the self-governing region, to give advice on policy and decisions.

The regional *Ataman* was appointed by the area German field commander,⁹ but all others were chosen by the Cossacks. In keeping with the self-governing concept, the *stanitsa* and *rayon Atamans* were subordinate to the regional *Ataman* rather than the German Command. In the structure outlined by the Germans, the regional *Ataman* had two deputies to assist with the regional administrative responsibilities. Among the most important responsibilities was that of administering the six sections of ministries which made up the regional government. The ministries organized consisted of Police,

THE CAUCASUS UNDER GERMAN ADMINISTRATION



Finance, Agriculture and Animal Care, Business and Roads, Health and Education and Culture.¹⁰

Finally, a traditional responsibility for the regional *Ataman* was command of the military forces. The Germans, in the official report submitted on the self-governing region, recognized the ability of the *Ataman* to recruit and command military forces for "service for the liberation of their homeland from Bolshevism". In keeping with this goal by the end of 1942 three regiments of Cossacks had been established all under *Ataman* control.¹¹ In addition a German survey indicated that another 3,000 men had been raised locally by the Cossacks for the defence of their home areas. German projections indicated the possibility of developing a Cossack army of 75,000 men for this self-governing region.¹²

The report on the self-governing region presented a very pragmatic reason for establishing the self-governing region. Very bluntly, it stated: "Where a Cossack fights or an *Inogorodni* falls (in combat), a German soldier does not have to fight or die."¹³ As an additional reason, a successful self-governing territory founded upon Cossack military strength could help bind the Ukraine, Russia's granary, and the oil wealth of the Caucasus to Germany.

Despite all of these plans, which seemed to be succeeding, the continuance of the Cossack self-governing region was not decided by the success or failure of this experiment but rather by the fortunes of war. Once the fate of the Sixth Army was sealed at Stalingrad, in December 1942, the long salient into the Caucasus that was Army Group A could no longer be defended. As a result, at the beginning of 1943 the German army initiated an orderly withdrawal of its forces from the Caucasus. In its wake came thousands of inhabitants of that region who feared the return of the Soviet army. It is interesting to note that the *Wehrmacht* did not simply abandon these allies with whom they had worked for such a short period of time. Instead, these refugees were helped to make the long trek westward as the German army retreated.¹⁴

For the Cossack refugees from the self-governing region, and for other refugees from Cossack *stanitsas* outside the self-governing area, the next year was a year of almost constant movement, often on the fringes of the front lines. With mainly horse-drawn vehicles to carry their belongings, approximately 14,000 Cossack refugees moved from the Caucasus towards an unknown western destination. With them was Major O.W. Müller, who was regarded as the liaison officer between the Cossacks, the German army and the *Ostministerium*.¹⁵ This group of refugees, including soldiers and

civilians (complete with families) made the trek from the Don and Kuban regions to Kamenets Podolsk during the autumn of 1943. Since Kamenets Podolsk was situated near the Polish-Ukrainian border, it seemed a safe place for the Cossacks to settle and build villages for themselves. The Cossacks hoped that Kamenets Podolsk was only a temporary place to settle since it was thought that the fortunes of war would return the initiative to the Germans and they would regain the Kuban and Don with the planned offensive of 1943.

The German spring offensive of 1943, called Operation *Zitadelle*, aimed to defeat elements of the Soviet army in the Kursk salient. It was not in fact launched until July 1943, and was by any standards unsuccessful. Once the Kursk offensive failed, the German army never again regained the initiative on the eastern front. Instead there was a series of retreats and withdrawals, culminating in the defeat of the German army in May, 1945.

When this 1943 spring offensive did not produce the results hoped for by the German High Command, the Cossacks' temporary home was changed from Kamenets Podolsk, and in the autumn of 1943 they were sent northward to the Novogrudok vicinity, a community west of Minsk in Belorussia. Here land was divided among the refugees and again they had an opportunity to build up a new community. This district was fairly peaceful and the Cossacks were able to build homes and develop agricultural enterprises.¹⁶

Even though this group of Cossacks had been under *Wehrmacht* protection for a considerable period of time, their assignment to Belorussia marked yet another stage in their history. In late 1943, Belorussia was under the administration of S.S. General Curt Gottberg, who was to have considerable influence on the Cossacks at this time.

As the eastern campaign proceeded through the difficult years of 1942-43, it was obvious to Gottberg and many other S.S. officers that the old myths about the German crusade in the east and the stupidity of the Slavic people were indefensible. The bitter fighting against the Soviet army in the winters of 1941-42 and 1942-43 proved that the Slav was not subhuman; he was a hardy and determined opponent who was every bit a match for the German military machine. This fact caused Gottberg and other high-ranking S.S. officers to question the government's policy in the east. Assigned as Commissar General of Belorussia, Gottberg not only ignored official National Socialist policies toward Slavs, but, in addition, called for self-government of the former Soviet citizens

under his administration. Gottberg's appointment to head the German government in Belorussia was unique in that through this appointment he was not only head of that region's S.S., but in addition he became *Reichskommissar*, working with Rosenberg's *Ostministerium*. Though Rosenberg originally sought to appoint his old friend Arno Schickedanz to this position, he could not gain any support for this idea and therefore agreed to Gottberg, who was in fact Himmler's choice.¹⁷

Gottberg's enlightened ideas regarding the Slavic people made Belorussia an ideal place for the Cossacks. As *Reichskommissar*, he called for self-government for Belorussia and helped form the Belorussian control council to promote self-government. Furthermore he appointed a council president in December 1943. Since Belorussia was plagued by large numbers of partisans during this period, he promoted the formation of some 60 battalions of Belorussian soldiers to combat the partisans. Given such a favourable political environment, the Cossacks, though newcomers, were able to reorganize their communities, and they began to prosper even though they considered Belorussia only a temporary home.¹⁸ As they had moved westward, innumerable stragglers joined them, and by the spring of 1944 there were about 25,000 Cossacks in the Novogrudok self-governing region.

These Belorussian Cossacks were not a fully autonomous nation, since they had connections with several other groups in German-occupied Europe. They maintained close contact with General von Pannwitz's Cossacks at Mielau, as well as with the Cossacks in the *Hauptverwaltung*. They also worked with General Gottberg and his S.S., and apparently had some contact with Himmler's agents who sought to recruit them into an S.S. volunteer unit.¹⁹

The Belorussian Cossacks, however, did not appear interested in the initiatives of the S.S. They had already structured their own political and military systems. As was traditional among the hosts, they elected a leader – the charismatic Sergei Pavlov, who had been an important figure in developing volunteer units since 1942. Pavlov served them well, creating and maintaining a strong community.

As the Soviet Army approached Belorussia in the spring of 1944, the area around Novogrudok became a centre of partisan activity. On their own initiative, but using small arms supplied by the Germans, the Cossacks organized several regiments. They quickly proved themselves capable of defending their settlement and their families from the partisans.²⁰

According to Major O.W. Müller, the German liaison officer,

the regiments within the self-governing region were mostly led by older Cossack officers. Since the self-governing region held a multitude of refugees from varying backgrounds, one problem facing the Germans in the area was uniform recognition. For example, members of the Cossack division came to Novogradok to spend their leave periods with friends and families. They wore German uniforms but with Cossack shoulder-boards. Translators recruited from various Soviet nationalities came to Novogradok wearing German uniforms, but without German rank insignia. Apparently, the free Cossacks within the self-governing area wore traditional Cossack headgear and German field blouses, but affixed to them a full set of old-style Cossack insignia. In addition they wore blue trousers with a stripe on the outside seam signifying the host. All of this, which Major Müller called the "*Uniformfrage*" (uniform question), caused concern for fear that someone would accidentally be shot because a sentry failed to recognize a uniform. This problem, however, was insoluble because all of the units mentioned were proud of their unique uniforms and had no desire to change.²¹

Another problem, mentioned in Müller's report, was the presence of Cossack women and children in the region, which by 1944 was becoming an armed camp. Some of the women had husbands in German service, others had lost their husbands in the war, and, Müller feared, others had husbands who were fighting with the Soviets or with the partisans. His desire was to send some of the families away, due to the security problems, but as he recognized "a Cossack without his weapons, horse, and wife cannot live." Therefore, the families stayed.²²

Though far away from their native *stanitsas*, life in Novogradok seemed pleasant. The Cossacks established homes, they farmed, they opened a school and a hospital and built an Orthodox Church. In mid-1944 with the advance of the Soviet army the war again caught up with them and they were forced to move. As they once again prepared to head westward, *Ataman* Pavlov, who had been an important figure in developing the self-governing region, was killed. He died on June 17, 1944, either shot mistakenly by a sentry or assassinated by a partisan. With his death, an election was held and the Cossacks elected Colonel T.T. Domanov as their new *Ataman*. Domanov, a former Soviet army major, was a conscientious leader, but he lacked the personal charisma of Pavlov. In spite of this he was successful in holding together what one writer has called the "Little Nation" as it again moved westward.²³

Extricating these refugees from the Novogrudok area before it was overrun by the Soviet army, and relocating them to a place of comparative safety was a serious problem, considering the military situation. The responsibility for the Cossacks and the problems of relocating them were assumed to a considerable degree by the S.S. With General Gottberg as well as *Reichsführer* Himmler interested in their welfare, the S.S. took steps to relocate the Cossacks and some Caucasian refugees (approximately 4,000–5,000) to a place of comparative safety.

After considering the problem at some length, the S.S. decided to transport the refugees from Belorussia into the Adriatic operations zone in Italy, near the Italian city of Tolmezzo. This area would serve as a temporary home for the Cossacks, who could assist in the subjugation of this heavily partisan-infested region.²⁴

In the last few weeks of July, the Cossack refugees in the following numbers were moved to northern Italy:

Caucasians:	2,000 soldiers
	2,000 ordinary citizens
	700 horses
Cossacks:	9,000 soldiers
	6,000 older Cossacks
	4,000 ordinary citizens
	10,000 horses
	3,000 children
	400 wagons. ²⁵

The arrangements for transport, all departure preparations and quarters in Italy were arranged by the S.S. and the operations zone commander S.S. Major-General Odilo Globocnik. Globocnik welcomed the Cossacks into his zone of northern Italy since he saw them as allies in his constant campaign to subdue the area's partisan bands.

Even though the S.S. made the necessary administrative arrangements for the Cossacks, the actual transportation was again left to the Cossacks themselves. In the latter part of July, 1944, again their long column of wagons, carts, horses and even dromedaries moved westward to northern Italy. The trip which began in mid-summer lasted until September, when the refugees arrived and were settled at Tolmezzo.²⁶ For the next eight months the Cossacks were to call northern Italy their home.

Italy, in autumn 1944 was not particularly a peaceful place for the Cossacks. Prior to their arrival, Tolmezzo had been forcibly



Migration of anti-Soviet Cossacks, 1942-1945.

cleared of its residents by the S.S. in order to give the Cossacks homes for their families. This action caused considerable resentment among the Italians and this, coupled with increasing partisan activity in the region, required the Cossacks to maintain their regiments as organized at Novogradok and occasionally to engage in skirmishes with the Italian partisans. They did not, however, relish anti-partisan duty against the Italians and only performed it when necessary to defend their community.²⁷

Despite this problem, the Cossacks again created a self-governing region, established a church and school and attempted to create a *stanitsa*, as close as possible to the communities they had left behind. Represented here were Don, Kuban, Terek and Siberian Cossacks. Close by was another settlement of Caucasians including Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Ossetians and assorted other tribes. They too had their own self-governing area.²⁸

These settlements would last until the end of the war and remained under S.S. protection throughout this late war period. Tolmezzo was the final self-governing area for the Cossacks, an institution which had begun in the Kuban in 1942. Though the self-governing regions were established through the *Wehrmacht's* authority, by 1945 the S.S. had made serious inroads into the army's affairs with the Soviet nationalities. Thus, while the Cossacks had been promoted by Rosenberg and the *Ostministerium* and utilized as early as 1941 by the *Wehrmacht*, 1945 found them increasingly patronized by the S.S. In view of this change, the leadership of the Cossacks in occupied Europe should perhaps be reviewed in some detail.

WHO LEADS THE COSSACKS? WHO CHAMPIONS THEIR CAUSE?

The struggle of the Cossacks to liberate their homeland from the hated Bolshevik oppressor brought them into the ranks of the German Army, with whose aid they hoped to regain their lost freedom.

(Alexander von Bosse, 1950)

Plans for the future of a greater Cossackia under German influence were by no means entirely centred on General von Pannwitz and the 1st Cossack Division; nor did all the supporters of the Cossacks wear field grey, the colour of the *Wehrmacht* uniform. In the years 1942–43, there were several separate agencies promoting various schemes for independent Cossack groups not directly affiliated with the Cossack Division.

For example, Alfred Rosenberg, as head of the *Ostministerium*, had long favoured the construction of a *cordon sanitaire* to isolate the Russians from Europe once the Soviet Union was defeated. Since the Cossacks had a reputation of opposition to the Bolsheviks, Cossackia was one of the key southern states on which the *cordon sanitaire* was based.¹ As mentioned earlier, Rosenberg's plans for promoting various ethnic groups in the Soviet Union had fallen on deaf if not hostile ears with Hitler being one of the most critical. Since, however, National Socialist Germany was rather loosely structured in a series of decentralized mini fiefdoms rather than a true pyramidal organizational structure responsible to Hitler, Rosenberg was able to continue his plans to construct a *cordon sanitaire* and to promote various ethnic groups within the Soviet Union.

With his desire to influence these groups, especially the Cossacks, in early 1942 Rosenberg established a central office (*Leitstelle*) within his *Ostministerium* for liaison with the Cossacks in German-

occupied Europe. This office was directed by Dr Nicholas Himpel, a German who had been educated in Leningrad and who spoke flawless Russian. Himpel's office was an excellent contact for all Cossacks. Records indicate that Himpel's office dealt with both Glaskow's Cossack liberation movement and with General Krasnov and the more moderate Cossacks. During 1942 Himpel's staff visited P.O.W. camps to seek out Cossack prisoners and to assist them in joining Cossack volunteer units.²

Rosenberg's officials also carried their campaign to the front lines. When *Ataman* Pavlov emerged from obscurity in 1942, a representative from the *Ostministerium* repeatedly came to Pavlov's headquarters and discussed with the *Ataman* the need for Pavlov's forces to place themselves totally at the disposal of the German army. If this could be done, the *Ostministerium* indicated Germany's willingness to establish a Cossack state composed of the Don, Kuban and Terek regions. Though Pavlov and his associates were somewhat sceptical of this offer, it was consistent with the overall philosophy of the *Ostministerium*.

Dr Himpel seemed to be the key figure in Rosenberg's attempts to woo the Cossacks. In 1942, in addition to the other activities mentioned, Himpel contacted General Krasnov, who was still living in Berlin, and asked him to join the staff of the Cossack central office. At first Krasnov refused, but on January 25, 1943 he joined the central office and began working in cooperation with the German force.³ Apparently Krasnov found it advantageous to be within the political structure rather than to remain an outsider. In addition, Krasnov thought it wise to be within Berlin's political structure to counter the influence of Glaskow and his group who were repeatedly trying to influence German policies through their contacts within the S.S. and the *Gestapo*.

As already mentioned, many within the German political structure found it difficult to take Rosenberg and his political cohorts seriously. More prone to engage in ideological and racial fantasies than in the serious issues of governing the occupied eastern territories, Rosenberg and his officials were frequently ignored. As an example, the self-governing Cossack region approved by General Wagner's office on October 1, 1942, was not discussed with the *Ostministerium* or the designated administrator in the Caucasus Arno Schickedanz. Apparently, the *Wehrmacht* saw no need to discuss this matter with Rosenberg's staff of ideologues.⁴ Both the *Wehrmacht* and the *Ostministerium* favoured self-government for the Caucasus, but it is significant that while both sought self-

governing Caucasian regions, only the *Wehrmacht* possessed the power to establish such regions.

Even though the *Wehrmacht* usually ignored Rosenberg's agency, the common policy of the two organizations produced a very interesting proclamation in 1943. On November 10, 1943, Field Marshal Keitel, representing the *Wehrmacht*, and Alfred Rosenberg, head of the *Ostministerium*, issued a proclamation for the Cossacks. The proclamation stated:

Cossacks

The Cossack troops have never recognized the Bolsheviks. The Don, Kuban, Terek and Zaporogian Cossacks have always sought a free and independent life.

Now, your villages are occupied and have been plundered by the Bolsheviks. Where are your horses, where are your swords? The Cossacks are marching together with the German *Wehrmacht*. They are fighting for the rights of their own, for the Cossack way, for their own land to live on again.

The German army has found in you true and honourable comradeship, therefore, the German government promises the Cossacks the following:

1. All service rights and privileges.
2. The maintenance of Cossack customs which have earned you historical fame.
3. The inviolability of Cossack territories which through service and blood your ancestors earned.
4. When the Cossacks reach the territories of their ancestors, the German government will undertake the obligation to settle the Cossacks in east Europe and in so doing, will supply them with land and everything necessary for the independent life.
5. As compensation for this, the German government calls all Cossacks to work together as comrades with Germany and to take part with the other peoples of Europe to organize a Europe of freedom and order and provide for years of free happy work.

November 10, 1943

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, High Command of the German *Wehrmacht*, Alfred Rosenberg, Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories.⁵

This proclamation was not an isolated propaganda effort of the

time, nor was it the only instance of the *Wehrmacht* pursuing similar strategies to that of the *Ostministerium*. Whereas Himpel originally worked with the Cossacks exclusively through the *Ostministerium*, the latter part of 1943 found Himpel working in a liaison function with the German High Command.⁶ This function became even more significant when the German government ordered the creation of the Cossack *Hauptverwaltung* (or central administration) of the Cossack army in early 1944.

The Cossack central administration was in reality a logical companion to Rosenberg's and Keitel's⁷ proclamation of November 10, 1943. If, in fact, the German government was planning to recognize the independence of the Cossack territories and plan in the future for a self-governing border country, the logical time to create a Cossack administrative structure was now. Hence, as a follow-up to the November proclamation, General Köstring ordered the central administration's creation on March 31, 1944.⁸ Appointed as its head was General P.N. Krasnov with General V.G. Naumenko, Colonel S. Pavlov and Colonel N. Kulakov serving as the heads of various ministries. As the *Hauptverwaltung* was expanded through the remainder of the war, Krasnov developed a full military staff, including S.N. Krasnov, his nephew, as his Chief of Staff.

In practice, the *Hauptverwaltung* had very little if any power delegated to it since by 1944 National Socialist Germany was fighting for its survival and could not afford to release combat-ready forces under its command to an agency, such as the *Hauptverwaltung*, outside its direct control. Nonetheless, the *Hauptverwaltung* continued to exist and function until the end of the war and served to represent the Cossack interests within the German military and political structure.⁹

Rosenberg and his *Ostministerium* and the *Wehrmacht* were consistent in their proposals to utilize various groups within the Soviet Union in their campaign to defeat Bolshevism. Somewhat inconsistent was the change in attitude in 1944 of Himmler and his S.S. to officially sanction the Cossack cause. As already mentioned, Himmler was a potential convert to the cause of recruiting certain minorities within the Soviet Union due to his interest in racial and ethnic studies. On the other hand, he was vehemently anti-Slavic, and had been since the early 1920s, a cast of mind that was difficult to set aside. Himmler had a desire for power, however, and the need to maintain a massive fighting machine. Faced with the high casualties of 1941-43, the S.S. had to find a new source of fighting men if it was

to build the strength its leader actively sought. By 1943, given Himmler's desperate need, the Slavs were a potential source of manpower that had to be considered.

Himmler's recruitment of Slavs began first with Ukrainians, who were dubbed Galicians, and the Germans trained the first Galician division as a front-line combat division.¹⁰ This precedent, in addition to the publication of *Das Kosakentum*, made it relatively simple to broaden the recruiting pattern even further and attempt to assume control of the Cossack volunteers.

Apparently one of the earliest attempts by the S.S. to recruit Cossacks was sponsored by S.S. *Gruppenführer* Gottlob Berger, one of the leaders in the campaign to build foreign legions within the S.S.¹¹ It was proposed to Himmler, on December 24, 1942, that an S.S. police unit composed of Cossacks be established.¹² Correspondence indicates that the S.S. leaders were not receptive to the idea at that time because on July 1, 1943, Berger found himself defending to *Reichsführer* Himmler his proposal, which had not yet been adopted.¹³

The concept of S.S. Cossacks became a serious one in 1944, when it was put forward by Lieutenant-Colonel Michale Schulajiw, a former Soviet national who served as Commander in Chief of the Ukrainian Free Cossacks, an organization in Graz, Austria. A lengthy proposal was drafted by Schulajiw on September 29, 1944, proposing a Cossack police which would: (1) fight to destroy the Bolsheviks; and (2) fight as armed soldiers against terrorists (and partisans).

Schulajiw proposed to call the organization the S.S. Ukrainian Free Cossacks and the first proposed military unit the First Zaporogian Cavalry Division of the S.S. Ukrainian Free Cossacks. The membership within this division was to be free Ukrainian Cossacks, workers (in Germany) of Ukrainian nationality, volunteers from the Crimean Tatars and *Volkdeutsche* from the Ukrainian communities. While the soldiers were to be of mixed backgrounds, the unit's identity was definitely to be Cossack. They were to wear traditional *kumbanka* with the German eagle, but the eagle was imposed over a shield using an insignia of Prince Vladimir the Great. On the tunic's right breast the traditional Ukrainian coat of arms was to be used instead of the German eagle and swastika. As was traditional with Cossack units, riding breeches were to be worn with double red stripes on the outside seam.¹⁴ Commending his unit, Schulajiw commented that the free Ukrainian Cossacks had given loyal and true service to the Germans from 1917-44 and that the

Police Brigade Commander in the Wolhynia-Podolia region, Major General Hinter, attested to the loyalty of the Free Cossacks who assisted his command.¹⁵

Perhaps of greater significance were the attempts of the S.S. to gain control of the Cossack Division and the Cossack refugees, including able-bodied fighting men, who had been caught up in the retreat from the Caucasus and the Don in early 1943. Records do not indicate specifically when the S.S. first began to take an interest in General von Pannwitz's Cossack Division. In spite of the S.S. recruitment of Galicians (Ukrainians), as late as 1943 *Reichsführer* Himmler was still attacking the Slavs and ridiculing those Russians who were attempting to build armies to fight the Soviets.¹⁶ Sometime, however, between the autumn of 1943 and the summer of 1944, a striking metamorphosis occurred, and Himmler and his S.S. were totally converted to the idea of mobilizing former Soviet nationals into German service. It is interesting that in his post-war memoirs, Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt attributed this amazing change in attitude to efforts of the editor of the S.S. tabloid *Das Schwarze Korps*, Gunther D'Alquen, who became a convert to the cause in early 1944.¹⁷

The Himmler file in the Imperial War Museum contains a record of a conversation which occurred on July 15, 1944, between S.S. *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant-Colonel) Grothmann and Himmler. The topic of the conversation was apparently the expansion of the *Waffen S.S.*, the combat troops of the S.S. Among the issues discussed were the organization of a fighting unit, composed of Cossacks, in the Bialystok region and the proposal of the *Reichsführer* to place the Cossack Division in the organizational structure of the S.S. This request was to be made directly to the Führer, Adolf Hitler, himself.¹⁸

Regrettably, there is no record of any conversations between the Führer and Himmler on this topic. Yet, such a dialogue certainly occurred because on August 26, 1944, General von Pannwitz and his Chief of Staff, Colonel von Schultz, were ordered to report to the *Reichsführer* to discuss the disposition of the Cossack Division. By this time, Himmler had received what he desired, a military command. Now serving as Commander in Chief of all German military replacements, as well as Commander of the S.S., Himmler planned to transfer the scattered Cossack units which were still stationed on the western front¹⁹ to Yugoslavia for the formation of a second Cossack Division. His major reason, however, for calling von Pannwitz for the conference was to propose the transfer of the

Cossack Division to the S.S. – a transfer which included all of the German cadre. When Himmler proposed this transfer, von Pannwitz replied very simply and directly, "I have been in the army since I was fifteen. To leave it now would seem to me like desertion."²⁰

This meeting with General von Pannwitz, his Chief of Staff, *Reichsführer* Himmler, and *Obersturmbannführer* Grothmann was of great significance. Despite von Pannwitz's refusal to enter the S.S.; together with his division, the discussions of the four men were wide-ranging and would noticeably affect the Cossack Division. In the course of the discussions the strength of German-sponsored Cossack units in the Reich itself and in German-occupied Europe was first noted. The strength was listed as follows:

1. The Cossack division, commanded by von Pannwitz, had a recognized strength of 13,000 Cossacks and 4,500 Germans.
2. The Reserve and Replacement Regiment, still a part of von Pannwitz's command but stationed in France, had an approximate strength of a thousand men.
3. Both von Pannwitz and Himmler recognized the continued existence of various units in any number of German political and military organizations which still utilized Cossack workers or volunteers.
4. A Cossack regiment consisting of approximately 6,000 soldiers and their families were moving from Belorussia under the leadership of S.S. General Curt von Gottberg, to the territory on the Adriatic coast line administered by the S.S. (due to the heavy partisan activity).
5. Finally, that a Cossack regiment was stationed in Warsaw.²¹

Having recognized the major elements of Cossack strength in German-occupied Europe, Himmler sought to place all Cossack fighting units under General von Pannwitz. Through this proposal a Cossack corps was to be formed, utilizing the existing Cossack division as the nucleus. The organization of the division under this corps structure was:

1. One cavalry brigade consisting of two regiments.
2. One Plastun Regiment (infantry) in addition to three battalions.
3. Each division was to have a signal battalion, a reconnaissance battalion, an engineer battalion, and an artillery regiment (if possible, three light and one heavy battalions).
4. The *Reichsführer* indicated as well his desire to have a heavy

artillery regiment, a Flak (anti-aircraft) Regiment, and an assault gun (self-propelled) battalion assigned to the corps troops.

Perhaps of greatest significance, an agreement was reached between von Pannwitz and Himmler that the Cossack Division, soon to be the Cossack Corps, was placed under S.S. administration in terms of replacements and supplies. The German cadre, as well as their Cossack troops, would retain their traditional uniforms and their *Wehrmacht* or Cossack ranks.²² The establishment of this new corps, the S.S. 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, could only have existed within National Socialist Germany. It was a cavalry corps, composed of Cossacks who were fighting for their cause, formed by the German *Wehrmacht* and (after the August 26, 1944, meeting) enlarged and supplied by the principal antagonist of the Slavs, the German S.S.

Anyone familiar with Himmler's character and wartime career would understand his motives for such a proposal. Himmler desired success as a military leader. His combat organization, the *Waffen* S.S. had distinguished itself on the eastern front in many actions, but its success was due to the determination of the individual soldiers and the leadership of the officers commanding the divisions, not to his leadership. Himmler realized this and desired military laurels for himself. A strong and successful Cossack division was simply one more step toward his goal to be recognized as a military leader. For von Pannwitz the affiliation with the S.S. would resolve a nagging problem — the continual shortage of men and material.

Since the 1st Cossack Division was organized, von Pannwitz had faced constant problems in receiving adequate supplies. In the summer or autumn of 1943, von Pannwitz visited his old friend General Edgar von Buttlar-Brandenfels and complained bitterly about his unit's low morale due to the insane policies of the German government towards eastern peoples, and, in addition, the severe problems he was having with supplies and equipment.²³ Since 1943 many *Wehrmacht* leaders had been convinced that the latest model tanks, the best self-propelled guns, and most of the new assault rifles, were all being siphoned off by the *Waffen* S.S. In fact, the S.S. did have first access to the most modern supplies and equipment, assisted through Himmler's industrial complex.²⁴ Through the agreement between Himmler and General von Pannwitz, the Cossack Division was connected to this superior supply source without actually making the Cossack units a part of the S.S. While it

was an unholy alliance from von Pannwitz's perspective, it helped resolve the supply problem.

All of the political manoeuvring between the *Wehrmacht*, the *Ostministerium* and the S.S., as described in this chapter, made the Cossacks an interesting phenomenon in German-occupied Europe. Favoured almost from the beginning of the campaign by both the *Wehrmacht* and the *Ostministerium*, the racial purity bestowed on them by the Wannsee Institute, together with the personal interest expressed by Himmler, made them unique among the eastern peoples. None of this, however, should obscure the fact that the sponsorship of Cossack units in German uniform began with, and remained in, the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*.

By all available evidence, it seems to have been Major Claus von Stauffenberg, Chief of the Organizational Section II of the *Oberkommando des Heeres*, who advocated and received the authorization for a select number of Soviet nationalities to actually fight with the *Wehrmacht*.²⁵ Throughout the years 1941-43 it was local *Wehrmacht* commanders on the eastern front who recruited to their commands squadrons of Cossack cavalry to bolster the depleted divisions and perform the traditional cavalry role of scouting and reconnaissance. Finally, it was the *Wehrmacht* that authorized, in 1943, the 1st Cossack Division, the only Cossack Division within the German army. From 1941 until the end of the war the leadership was within the ranks of the *Wehrmacht*. They tolerated the initiatives of the S.S. to receive the desperately needed supplies and equipment which the S.S. had in quantity. They tolerated the officials which the *Ostministerium* sent into their rear areas, but it was the *Wehrmacht* who controlled the rear areas and authorized the self-governing regions.

Since the initiatives and leadership came from this military organization, the question remains as to why they promoted Cossack recruitment. Research indicates there were two schools of thought promoting the German army's use of Cossacks (and other nationalities). The first and most obvious was simple military utility. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *Wehrmacht* needed men to continue its campaign against the Soviet Union and simply to survive. The clearest and most concise statement describing this position was made by *General der Osttruppen*, Heinz Hellmich, in his report (March 23, 1943) on the *Osttruppen*. Hellmich clearly outlined the utilitarian position stating:

They [*Osttruppen*] have substantially contributed to the saving

of German blood. This is and must remain the aim and purpose of *Osttruppen*. The situation therefore demands the utmost increase of the Russian population. They must not only give their strength in the form of work, but must be ruthlessly exploited to the last and sacrifice their lives for us, the best they have to offer. They are just good enough for that.²⁶

The other group or school of thought within the *Wehrmacht*'s ranks is not as easily categorized as the utilitarians. Described in an earlier chapter as the "Other Germany Group", it consisted of a number of reformers, Balts, and Germans with experience with Soviet nationals. This element in the *Wehrmacht* sought to liberate or plan for a new Russia once the Bolshevik regime had been destroyed. It was this group which most influenced policies towards the Cossacks, and specifically the Cossack Division. Somehow General von Pannwitz, himself a member of this latter group, was successful in securing pro-Slavic *Wehrmacht* officers for the preponderance of his German cadre for the 1st Cossack Division.

A review of the activation materials for the Cossack Division does not indicate any type of prerequisites or specifications for the officers destined to lead the Cossack Division.²⁷ Granted, since it was a cavalry division most of the commanders were cavalry officers. Von Pannwitz's Chief of Staff, Colonel Joachim von Schultz, was an old cavalry comrade from von Pannwitz's pre-war period with the 11th Cavalry Regiment in Austria. All accounts of von Schultz's performance indicated von Pannwitz's complete confidence in his Chief of Staff, both as a military leader and more specifically as someone that possessed sound understanding of the Soviet peoples. Von Pannwitz, however, chose von Schultz even before the activation of the division, and as his first and most significant staff member (Chief of Staff), it was to be expected that von Schultz would share his superior's perspective.²⁸ To better illustrate the staffing and leadership provided by the *Wehrmacht* for the division, several highly-placed officers deserve mention as examples of leadership given to the Cossacks.

Colonel Constantine Wagner, who was first commander of the 1st Don Regiment and later Commander of the 1st Cossack Cavalry Division is an excellent example of the strong leadership offered to the Cossacks. Wagner was a career cavalry officer, first entering German service on January 4, 1921 as a member of the 6th Prussian Cavalry Regiment. In 1934 he transferred into the signal troops and at the time the order came transferring him to the Cossack Division,

he was Commander of the Panzerkorp Signal Battalion 400.²⁹ As a young lieutenant in the mid-1920s Wagner began to study Russian. His interest in Russian apparently came from his father who had lived in Russia for three years and who had a strong interest in the Slavic people. With both a knowledge of the Russian people and as a trained cavalry officer, Wagner was an asset to the Cossack Division and the individual Cossacks within the division.³⁰

Another example of excellent staffing for the division was the appointment of Colonel Alexander von Bosse as Commander of the 2nd Cossack Cavalry Brigade. Von Bosse was a Baltic German born in Livonia and educated in Petrograd. He fought with the Baltic *Landeswehr* against the Soviet army and was forced to flee to Germany, joining the *Reichswehr*³¹ in 1923. As a member of the *Reichswehr* he served as a cavalry officer and sometime in the 1930s made the transition to the Panzerkorps. In the initial phases of the war, von Bosse fought with the 3rd and 11th Panzer Divisions, and was transferred to the Cossack division as a lieutenant-colonel, to activate the 1st Cossack Brigade.³²



23. Colonel Constantine Wagner, Commander of the First Cossack Division in 1945.

Other officers who also made their mark were Lieutenant-Colonel Lehmann, who commanded the 3rd Kuban Regiment in the 2nd Cossack Cavalry Division, and who had been a willing and enthusiastic Cossack unit commander since 1942, and Lieutenant-Colonel Hans von Wolff who had also commanded Cossacks since 1942, and who was the logical choice as von Bosse's counterpart commanding the 1st Cossack Cavalry Brigade.³³ Even though documentation does not exist to validate the claim, it seems as if the German High Command made a conscious effort to staff the Cossack Division (later Corps) with officers who were both skilled as cavalymen and able to understand the Cossacks they commanded. Considering the earlier difficulties the *Osttruppen* had encountered with unsympathetic officers, the staffing of the Cossack Division was exemplary.

Inevitably problems persisted with the German non-commissioned cadre, but again the high calibre of the officers made up for this. Men like Colonel Wagner, Colonel von Bosse, and von Pannwitz himself, were committed to fair treatment for the Cossacks. They and the *Wehrmacht* they represented led the Cossacks – and led them well. In the autumn of 1943, they led them into action against Tito's partisans.

THE COSSACK DIVISION IN COMBAT

Theirs was a desperate struggle in the final hours of the war, when General von Pannwitz's work reached its zenith and was plunged to its destruction. To the bitter end the Cossack Corps did more than its duty and frustrated every effort of the enemy to cross the Vital Drava section.

(F.W. Von Mellenthin)

Few within the Cossack Division, either German or Cossack, were aware of the political manoeuvring which was occurring in the German government concerning the division's higher line of authority. Instead, the division and its personnel were intent on the mission for which they were trained: the destruction of Communist forces.

The division had left Mielau on September 14–15, 1943 for its combat assignment. By the end of the month the division was in Yugoslavia with the 1st Brigade being in the Agram area and the 2nd Brigade located west of Belgrade. The overall operational assignment of the division was to guard railway and roads between Agram and Belgrade, an area which had become heavily infested with partisans.¹ Tito's partisans were highly organized by this period, operating in strength from the Moslavina, Kordun and Schumherak river regions. Controlling roughly 220,000 men, Tito posed a serious threat to the German positions – a threat which had to be dealt with.²

As the Cossack Division reached Yugoslavia and took up its assigned position, it was subordinated to the *Wehrmacht*'s 69th Reserve Corps. This assignment to a higher headquarters occurred on October 5, 1943, just in time for the division to prepare itself for its first major tactical assignment, Operation Fruska–Gora.³ Beginning on October 12, 1943, Operation Fruska–Gora had been planned by the *Wehrmacht* even before the Cossack Division's

arrival in Yugoslavia. The purpose of the operation was to break the partisans' stranglehold over this area, a short distance north and west of Belgrade. The Cossack Division began its attack on October 12, with the intent of reducing this partisan stronghold. As might be expected, General von Pannwitz exercised strong personal leadership and flew daily in his Fiesler *Storch* liaison plane to various parts of the front to observe the battle and issue orders directly to the various commanders. In this battle the Cossack Division received its baptism of fire and, according to the records, performed admirably. The Fruska-Gora campaign was not an overwhelming victory for the Germans, but a major troop concentration area and supply area was taken from Tito's partisans.⁴

After this initial action, the anti-partisan role of the division caused it to develop a strategy which was exceptionally well suited to its assignment. The effective combat force was divided into three battle groups, all of approximately the same strength, which could be deployed to specific areas where the partisans were especially active. Through the formation of these mobile battle groups, it was possible to strengthen control over south-eastern Yugoslavia.⁵

For the operational year of 1943, the division was engaged in the mission of combating Tito's partisans in the eastern half of Yugoslavia. Their assigned role was to fight in the combat operations developed by the 69th Reserve Corps. During the summer months of 1943, Field Marshal Baron Maximillian von Weichs had planned the Corps' autumn and winter operations. This plan consisted of an overall offensive against Tito, composed of a number of campaigns ranging throughout the eastern half of the country. Such a strategy would be better suited to applying maximum pressure to Tito's forces since he would be forced to commit his smaller resources to a wide ranging area.⁶

In keeping with this strategy, elements of the Cossack Division participated in Operation Fruska-Gora, Operation *Wildsau* (Wild Sow), Operation Panther and, at the end of December, Operation *Weihnachtsmann* (Santa Claus).⁷ In all assignments, the Cossacks performed exceptionally well. The elements of the division that were stationed in Croatia earned the nickname, the "North Croatian Fire Brigade", as a result of their ability to move quickly to crisis situations.⁸

According to one German officer, the Cossacks were extremely well-suited to the type of anti-partisan campaign waged in Yugoslavia. They were skilful in staging ambushes, recognizing partisan ambushes and executing flanking movements and rear attacks in

contrast to frontal assaults. The Cossack leadership, tactics and armaments were all important factors in their success in tactical objectives. Their natural skills in waging guerilla-type warfare, coupled with their superior weaponry and leadership, made them formidable foes of Tito's forces.⁹

Certain problems did emerge, however, during the division's first few months of combat. In spite of its successful battle record during the latter part of 1943, there were morale problems which resulted in the desertion of some of the division's members to the partisans. Disturbed by this problem, von Pannwitz investigated the situation. It seems that the reason for desertion was a continuation of the same old problem encountered by most German commanders who sought to use volunteers from the Soviet people: the mistreatment of individual soldiers by members of the German cadre. Von Pannwitz sought to encourage the use of more *émigrés*, with the aim of placing more officers and advisers within the division who would be sympathetic to the Cossack cause. One of these *émigrés* was George Nikolaevich Druzhakin, who had been living in France since the Russian Civil War. Druzhakin worked with Colonel Constantine Wagner, later commander of the 1st Cossack Cavalry Division, to improve relations between the German cadre and the Cossacks. Wagner's remedy for the mistreatment of the Cossacks by the German cadre was direct and simple: if repeated, the German involved was immediately transferred to the Russian front. Thus, despite the fact that the Cossack Division had similar problems to other volunteer units, regarding the attitude of the German cadre towards the Slavs under their command, within the Cossack Division there was a strong commitment to discipline any German who exhibited anti-Slavic attitudes. Once the Cossacks understood this German commitment, morale improved, and by early 1944 desertions had ceased.¹⁰

The Cossacks themselves had some bad habits which caused concern among the German cadre. During the course of the campaigns against the partisans, they were occasionally involved in bitter street-fighting for villages occupied by the Tito's forces. The German cadre found it virtually impossible in such cases to prevent the Cossacks from looting, which had been a traditional privilege of theirs for centuries. Being under German supervision did not change their habits. While General von Pannwitz had restricted alcohol to the Cossacks in Mielau, plenty could be found in Yugoslavia. At the conclusion of a victorious battle over a village, excessive alcohol, together with the intoxication from winning

a battle, sometimes led to destruction, looting and even rape. Punishment in such instances was swift and often severe, at least by Allied standards. The Cossack troops were punished for infractions by their Cossack commanders, and death sentences, confinement to a dark cell with bread and water, and even flogging, were used to maintain discipline and order.¹¹

Severe discipline was necessary as the division faced an increasingly strong and well-supplied foe. As the Cossack Division took its position in Yugoslavia, its arrival coincided with the establishment of Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean's British military mission with Tito's Communist partisans.¹² In addition, at the same time, the Soviet Union began sending supplies to Tito's forces. Symbolic of their support for Tito, in the fall of 1943, the Soviet Presidium sent Tito a golden presentation sword. With symbolic and material support from both Britain and the Soviet Union¹³ Tito's partisans were a serious threat to the Cossacks.

Yugoslavia, however, provided some valuable allies for the Germans. Fighting within the same region as the Cossack Division were the *Ustashi*. The *Ustashi* were Croatian soldiers in the service of the puppet government led by Dr Ante Pavelić, *Poglavnik* or Führer of the Croatian state. The Cossacks shared the same general area with the *Ustashi* forces, but the relationship between the Croats and the Cossacks was not the close relationship expected of allies. The Croats were by and large Roman Catholics who had a long-standing tradition of rivalry with their Serbian Orthodox neighbours. Within Croatia the *Ustashi* waged a war against Tito's partisans, in addition to a rather brutal war against the Serbian Orthodox minority.

The Cossacks felt closer to this Serbian minority than they did to the Croats. They watched with bitterness, as the Croats destroyed Serbian villages and Orthodox churches, using Tito and the war as an excuse to settle age-old rivalries. Due to the Cossack identification with the Serbian minority cause, the Cossacks concluded an unofficial truce with Tito's bitter rival, the royalist Serbian resistance leader, General Draža Mihailovic, who regarded Tito and the *Ustashi* as a more serious enemy than the Germans. Mihailovic's forces, the *Chetniks*, fought the *Ustashi*, Tito's partisans and the German army. Only the Cossacks were their unofficial allies.¹⁴

Despite the problems within the division and between the Cossacks and their Croatian allies, the Cossacks very effectively countered the partisan threat in Yugoslavia. During the last months

of 1943, the division fought successfully to keep the rail line between Zagreb and Brod open, when the partisans were attempting to wreck this important communication link. They were engaged in fighting between Glina and Sisak where the partisans had encircled the Germans and Croatian troops and they freed the encircled forces. In all cases, the Cossacks performed exceptionally well, inflicting heavy casualties on Tito's forces and securing territory which had been threatened or controlled by the partisans.¹⁵

The necessity to move rapidly and counter ambushes and partisan raids resulted in the formation of the 55th Reconnaissance Battalion, one of the few all-German units within the division. Von Pannwitz had conceived the idea of a mobile, all-German, "fire brigade" which could be rushed to the scene of a critical raid or battle. In keeping with this plan, the unit was formed as a motorized battalion which would also serve as the division garrison. It was created between November and December of 1943, and by the end of the year it was billeted in Sisak where the division staff were also stationed.¹⁶

Despite the rigours of the bitter partisan war in the Balkan campaign, the Cossacks did not forget their traditional pleasures. The three regiments of the Second Brigade, stationed north of Brod, found the heavy oak forests a haven for wild boar. Oblivious to the dangers around them, the Cossacks enjoyed the diversion of wild boar hunting. The Terek regiment, with the approval of its German Commander Colonel Alexander von Bosse, built a riding course for Hubertus day (November 3), which was the traditional day for cavalry contests within the old German army. Recognizing the dangers from partisan attack, the participants carried weapons with them; one lieutenant even took his machine pistol while he rode. The Cossacks thus found time to enjoy their traditional hunting and equestrian games, but even more significant was the fact that the German commanders were flexible enough to allow such activities in a war zone. The policy was obviously good for the morale of the Cossack troops.¹⁷

The importance which the German cadre attached to such matters was shown in many other instances. For many members of the division, the Eastern Orthodox Church was central to their lives. The Cossacks seemed to place a great importance on regularly scheduled religious services, in addition to appropriate religious rites for their fallen comrades. Hence, when members of the division, German or Cossack, were killed in battle, priority was placed on recovering the bodies and giving a proper Christian burial for

both German and Cossack soldiers.¹⁸ The Germans were also careful to allow a full Orthodox celebration of Christmas, January 6, 1944. General von Pannwitz participated in this celebration, in the field, wearing a *cherkesska* fully trimmed with the wide silver tressing of the cavalry. Through such actions von Pannwitz not only allowed, but promoted, traditional Cossack customs.¹⁹

The success of the Cossack Division and their *esprit de corps* brought a substantial number of visitors to the division camps in 1944. From Belgrade, in January of 1944, elements of the division were visited by General V.G. Naumenko, famed as a Kuban Cossack general in the Civil War, and Don Cossack General Tatarkin and General Andrei Shkuro. Von Pannwitz arranged for full military ceremony for these visitors, in spite of the war raging around them. The general's bodyguard, the *konvoi*, in full traditional regalia, escorted the elderly Naumenko into the camp. Then, in March, von Pannwitz welcomed General Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau in a visit to the Cossack Division. For his guest, von Pannwitz arranged that the Kuban Cossacks should provide a full parade view, complete with the accompaniment of the division trumpet corps.²⁰ When General Ernst Köstring, as *General der Osttruppen*, visited the division headquarters on April 5, 1944, he was also greeted by all of the pomp and ceremony of an old world cavalry regiment. Following the staff visit, Köstring and his accompanying officer were treated to performances by an all-Cossack choir and a Cossack band.²¹

Perhaps General von Grolman, commander of the Second Panzer Army, best summarized the situation during his visit in April of 1944. After seeing the division, he said: "It seems like another world to me here."²² In essence, this was probably the most significant factor in the success of the Germans with the Cossack Division; they had created another world, with all of the appropriate accoutrements and trappings. With other volunteer legions, the Germans were not as successful.

Jürgen Thorwald, in his recent book, *The Illusion*, clarifies to some extent the problems faced by the Germans with their foreign troops. As the title of the work indicates, there were a number of illusions, if not total misconceptions, held by many involved in the movement to utilize eastern peoples. The German officers involved in this movement deluded themselves that they could actually change the National Socialist policies toward Slavs and ultimately enlist the disenchanting Soviet people in a campaign to destroy Marxism.²³

Another illusion which seems evident after reading accounts from the period 1941-45 is the actual depth of nationalistic feeling possessed by some of the Soviet peoples or Soviet minorities sponsored or promoted by the Germans. Granted, as the Germans built their volunteer legions they did find strong nationalistic feelings among the Ukrainians and some Belorussians and Georgians. On the other hand, one could seriously question the nationalistic traditions or aspirations of the Kalmucks and the Turkestanis, at least judging from a European perspective. In many cases it would appear that the German cadre took a deep-seated anti-Russian and anti-Bolshevik perspective and attempted to promote a Western-style nationalism rather than be content with the feelings of the southern minority peoples of the Soviet Union.²⁴

In the case of the Cossacks, however, the illusions described were simply not relevant. *Wehrmacht* officers were able to work with the political apparatus and even the S.S. to effect a change in policy which permitted the Cossacks to have a favoured position among all eastern volunteer legions. Furthermore, there was no illusion about the extent of nationalism as a tradition within the Cossack hosts. For centuries they had regarded themselves as a separate and distinct people who took great pride in their customs and their unique heritage. It took very little effort on the part of the *Wehrmacht* to harness this traditional pride and inherent nationalistic feeling. Therefore, with a high degree of *esprit de corps* in the Cossack Division, by 1944, the remaining major problems were those of equipment and supply shortages, and the need to increase the division's manpower to counter the growing threat of Tito's partisans, constantly bolstered by supplies from the Allies.

Additional manpower was available to the Cossack Division without diluting the ethnic background of its membership. As mentioned in Chapter 3, following the unsuccessful Kursk offensives of July of 1943, a substantial number of eastern legions were transferred to the western front. This was largely due to Hitler's belief that the legionnaires were unreliable and that widespread desertions were occurring on account of the legionnaires fighting opposite their Slavic peers in the Soviet army. Because of this (unfounded) belief, a substantial number of the volunteer legions were transferred to the Atlantic defences, Scandinavia, and even the Channel Islands, in order to remove them from the temptation to desert to the Soviets.²⁵ Among the troops that were caught up in this transfer to the West were the Cossack units which had been retained by commanders on the eastern front and hence not sent to



24. In 1944 there were still Cossack squadrons on the western front. This photo which shows a Cossack unit in France is unique, since the soldiers wear the sleeve-shield of the Vlasov Army of Liberation.

Mielau. In addition, the Cossack Training Regiment did not go to the Balkans with the division, but was for some unknown reason sent to France, following the Cossack Division's departure to the Balkans.²⁶

Von Pannwitz needed the extra manpower that such units could provide, and moreover, by mid-1944 it was very important to extricate all Russian volunteers from the western front. Furthermore, the morale of Russian volunteers on the western front was very low since they wanted to fight the Soviets, not the western Allies. Between D-Day, June 6, 1944, and the early autumn of 1944, invading Allied forces encountered and captured a considerable number of eastern volunteers, including a number of Cossacks. According to the interrogations of prisoners of war captured in the Normandy region immediately after the Normandy campaign in 1944, several units stationed in France were primarily made up of Cossacks. For example, the 570th Cossack Battalion, attached to the 182nd Training Division, was encountered at Bethune, France, in early September, 1944. It consisted of about 600-700

soldiers but was actually composed of only 30 per cent Don Cossacks. Stationed near St Verna, its duty had been to guard V-1 emplacements.²⁷ In addition to this unit, British interrogations of prisoners of war placed the 5th Ost Stamm Regiment (5th Cossack Volunteers) in Langres and the 4th Coy Ost (Cossack) Battalion near Bernay (Eure). The prisoners indicated the existence of additional Cossack troops near Dole-Dijon-Chalons-sur-Marne and a headquarters unit at Lyons.²⁸

In all, the British interrogations of the Cossacks and other legionnaires established that the transferral of the eastern legions, including Cossack members, to the western front had been detrimental to morale. The 570th Cossack Battalion, consisting of 600-700 men, deserted to the Allies, having been waiting some time for an opportunity to surrender. One British interrogation report summed up the Cossack attitude: "Cossacks were anxious to return to Russia, having lost interest in the war."²⁹ Taken away from their main interest - fighting Bolshevism or Stalinism - the Cossacks had little reason to fight with the Germans and morale suffered accordingly.

Thus it was in the best interests of both the German High Command and of von Pannwitz to deploy the Cossacks in missions more meaningful to them, before these units in western Europe were simply lost, due to the rapid Allied advance. This being so, the meeting between General von Pannwitz and *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, on August 26, 1944 (mentioned in Chapter 8) was of great significance. Himmler's commitment as head of the replacement army to transfer the Cossack units in Western Europe to von Pannwitz's jurisdiction came none too soon, considering the speed of the Allied advance into France. It would take, however, some four months to extricate the Cossacks from their assigned locations in both eastern and western Europe and build a larger Cossack fighting force, the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps. Therefore, von Pannwitz was left to fulfil his assigned mission against Tito's forces in 1944 with the First Division only.

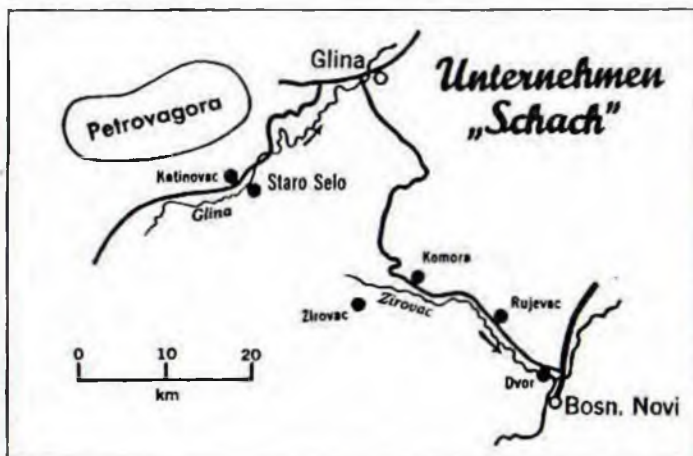
The Cossack Division engaged in several important operations in 1944 against both Tito's partisans and the Soviet Army. In the first few days of May, 1944, the division participated in an anti-partisan sweep entitled Operation *Schach*. The aim of the operation was to sweep through the Petrova Gora region, which was a stronghold for Tito's partisans. The Cossack Division was only a part of the sweep which was led by the German Second Panzer Army, but both brigades of the Cossack Division were committed to the fighting.



25. Time for relaxation. A Cossack trooper visits with two *Wehrmacht* and two S.S. soldiers in 1944.

The operation was successful in routing Tito's forces from this region, but not before heavy fighting erupted south-west of Glina, which resulted in the encirclement of the 1st Cossack Brigade. They were freed from this serious situation by a battalion of the 373rd German-Croatian Division, and the sweep was then successfully concluded, depriving Tito of his suzerainty over this region. While this was a successful operation, it was in some ways preparatory to a far more daring and significant operation – Operation *Rösselsprung*.³⁰

As a guerilla leader, Tito had attempted to keep his location and that of his headquarters secret. The Germans had learned that his headquarters were in Dvar, roughly 65 kilometres south-east of Bihac. Recognizing that destroying the headquarters or perhaps capturing Tito himself would seriously cripple the partisan effort, the Germans planned *Rösselsprung*, a combined air-and-land assault on Dvar. The air assault was spearheaded by an S.S. parachute battalion composed of 500 soldiers. At 7.00 a.m. on the morning of May 25, the S.S. parachutists were dropped into Dvar with ground forces, including units of the Cossack Division,



OPERATION SCHACH, ANTI-PARTISAN SWEEP OF THE
1ST COSSACK BRIGADE, 1944.

supporting the attack. Due to almost suicidal resistance by his headquarters' troops, Tito was able to escape. He left so abruptly, however, that he could only take a few staff members with him and left behind his full marshal's uniform, as well as large quantities of documents relating to partisan operations. Because of the German threat of capturing Tito, the latter was airlifted out of Yugoslavia by the Allies and with Allied assistance he established a new headquarters on the Dalmatian Island of Lissa. Through *Rösselsprung*, the German–Cossack–Croatian forces had succeeded in partisan operations in Yugoslavia.³¹

Rösselsprung's success, it would seem, should have substantially strengthened the German position in the Balkans. In fact, the situation would have been improved for the Germans and their Cossack–Croatian allies, were it not for a crisis caused by Germany's eastern allies. In the summer of 1943, the Soviet army launched a powerful offensive against Rumania. This offensive caused Rumania to terminate her alliance with Germany and join the Allied cause in support of the Soviet offensive. With Rumania and her forces no longer opposing the Soviet advance, the Soviet Army quickly forged ahead to the Yugoslav frontier at Turnu-

THE COSSACK DIVISION IN COMBAT

Severin and on the Danube close to the Iron Gate. In addition to leaving a hole in the German defences, this Rumanian defection allowed the Soviets to capture or decimate a large German force, a reconstituted Sixth Army, in Bessarabia.³² The situation deteriorated still further when Bulgaria withdrew from the war on September 11, 1944, placing the entire German defence in the Balkans in disarray.

The vacuum created by the surrender of two pro-German states allowed Soviet Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin's 4th Ukrainian forces to advance to the Danube, achieve a bridgehead, and, in cooperation with Tito's partisans, capture Belgrade on October 20, 1944. Therefore, in many respects, the progress made through well-planned Cossack-German-Croatian operations was negated by circumstances outside the Yugoslavian theatre of operations. As a result, the German position in Yugoslavia was in serious danger.³³

Despite Hitler's desire to separate volunteers, including the Cossacks, from the Soviet front, the rapid Soviet advance into the Balkans brought them into pitched battles with the Cossack Division. Perhaps the most significant engagement occurred on December 25, 1944 when the 133rd Soviet Infantry Division (the Stalin Division) launched an attack on Pitomacha on the River Drava, attempting to gain a bridgehead. Opposing the Soviet Division, the Cossack Division fought magnificently. Pitted against



26. A military funeral in Sisack, Croatia, 1944, held by the 1st Cossack Division.



27. German officers of the Cossack Division, in formation in Sisack Croatia, 1944.

an equally determined foe, the Cossacks launched the attack against the Soviet bridgehead, and after bitter fighting – much of it hand to hand – routed the Stalin Division. Due to the strong leadership he exhibited, much of the credit for the victory over the Stalin Division was given to Ivan Kononov, Commander of the 5th Don Regiment. Equally important was the leadership of men such as von Pannwitz, whose policies had created a strong and viable Cossack force, albeit too late.³⁴

Regrettably, for both the German and the Cossack cause, it was indeed too late, too late on all fronts. While the Cossack Division was successfully destroying the Stalin Division's bridgehead on the River Drava, the combined British and American armies had already swept across France and were poised along the western border of Germany for the final attack into the heart of Germany. Moreover, the Soviet army was on the eastern fringes of Germany, preparing to launch its final attack. No amount of National Socialist optimism could alter the fact that Germany was losing the war.

Seemingly oblivious to all of these ominous signs, the Cossack Division successfully continued its campaign to prevent the Soviets



28. Von Pannwitz, von Schulz and the Cossacks in Croatia, 1944.



29. General von Pannwitz giving a funeral address in 1944, Sisack Croatia.

from overrunning the vital Drava sector. In addition, the Cossack Division not only fought without a noticeable decline in morale, it actually increased in size. True to the commitment he had made, Himmler had begun the transfer of Cossack units from the western front, beginning in the autumn of 1944. The actual formation of a full Cossack Corps did not occur until February 25, 1945, when the High Command officially created the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, composed of the 1st and 2nd Cavalry Brigades and the 1st and 2nd Division. The 1st Division was commanded by Colonel Constantine Wagner and the second by von Pannwitz's trusted former Chief of Staff, Colonel Joachim von Schultz.³⁵ The enlargement of the division was accomplished by expanding the two existing brigades within the original division into full independent divisions. The final part of this division reorganization was to be accomplished by taking Ivan Kononov's 5th Regiment and building around it a third division, a dismounted or *Plastun* Division.³⁶ The latter formation was apparently planned but due to the war's end it was never completed. The War Diary of the German High Command, however, includes a schematic diagram, indicating the assignment of the 11th Luftwaffe Field Division to the Cossack Cavalry Corps. Perhaps this was done to augment the corps until the *Plastun* Division was fully organized and reached its authorized strength.³⁷

With this reorganization during February of 1945, and only two months from the war's end, von Pannwitz had achieved his goal: he had assembled virtually all of the Cossack troops in German service under his jurisdiction. He had also created a corps composed of non-Germans that was in every respect a first-rate military formation. But it was too late, for neither the German nor Cossack cause could prevail. Quite simply, the war was lost.

The Cossacks within the division, at Tolmezzo and in the *Hauptverwaltung*, all seemed to understand von Pannwitz's achievement. This was clearly recognized at the beginning of March, 1945, when an all-Cossack congress was held in the city of Virovitca. Assembled in the old castle were delegates from all regiments within the corps. Their purpose was to elect a field *Ataman*, officially, a supreme military commander of all Cossacks. The election of a field *Ataman* had been traditional within the hosts for centuries, but the last person to hold this office was the Tsarevich Alexei, who was murdered along with the remainder of the royal family in 1918. When all of the representatives were polled for their preference, they elected General von Pannwitz as their field *Ataman*.

The election of a foreigner, a German, was unprecedented. The



MAJOR ENGAGEMENTS OF THE 1ST COSSACK CAVALRY DIVISION AND THE
XV COSSACK CAVALRY CORPS, YUGOSLAVIA, 1943-45

office of *Ataman* had always been filled by a Cossack (or a Russian), but von Pannwitz had truly become their leader, the like of whom they had not seen since the time of the Revolution. Thus they passed over the heroes of another age, such as Kulakov, Shukuro and Krasnov, and chose instead a German general. Granted the Corps, itself, consisted of approximately 50,000 men, and with that small number was hardly representative of all Cossacks. Still it is significant that this number of men should have overlooked their own people and chosen von Pannwitz, a German, for this supreme honour.³⁸

Von Pannwitz, however, had little time to enjoy the honour. He was by nature an optimist, but by March of 1945 no amount of optimism could conceal the fact that Germany had lost the war. The successes of the Cossack Division had only affected one very small theatre of the war and were negated by the major battles fought against the Allies. For the Cossack Corps, an ultimate Soviet victory brought about a major problem; given its location, it would be captured by the Soviet Army. The German cadre within the corps, much like their cohorts in other theatres, saw the Soviets as their major enemy and felt certain that the Allies would soon realize the Bolshevik threat and would turn on the Soviets. Hence, the German cadre sought to arrange the movement of the corps to territory which would be controlled by the Western powers and prevent the corps from being captured by the Soviets.

Even while the war was coming to an end, the Cossack Corps faithfully fulfilled its final duties. It supported the March 9, 1945 German offensive in Hungary by launching its own offensive against a dangerous enemy bridgehead at Volpovo on the River Drava. After this last major and successful counter-offensive, the Cossack Corps engaged in a number of minor actions during the month of April, and then began to prepare itself for the withdrawal from Yugoslavia.³⁹

According to General F.W. Mellenthin, discussions started between General von Pannwitz and Colonel von Schultz on March 26, 1945, concerning the future of the Cossack Corps. A few days later, Colonel von Schultz discussed the same issue with Colonel Constantine Wagner, Commander of the 1st Division. The consensus between the superior officers resulted in a plan for the corps to fight its way back to Austria which would result in the corps falling into British hands.⁴⁰ Von Pannwitz felt that the British were anti-Communist and also first-rate soldiers. According to one source, von Pannwitz stated: "Don't forget Schultz that the Cossack

Cavalry Corps is the only true military anti-Bolshevik eastern formation, which is still intact and for which the West still has great use.⁴¹

It was felt that the Cossacks' best chance of survival lay with the British. As a result General von Pannwitz sent Lieutenant-Colonel von Rentlen, one of the corps' Baltic officers, to contact British Field Marshal Harold Alexander. Von Rentlen had fought the Bolsheviks in the Riga area with Alexander in 1919. This common bond, it was thought, would help von Rentlen to open the talks.⁴² Von Rentlen successfully reached British lines, and his arrival was noted by Colonel Andrew Horsburgh-Porter of the 27th Lancers:

One day a cavalcade headed by the most wonderful tall good-looking aristocratic gentleman with an enormous white Cossack hat came, and in perfect English said that he surrendered. He had an escort of Cossack troops. I instantly formed a tremendous liking for this old-fashioned cosmopolitan gentleman. He said he understood that Alexander was commander-in-chief and that "If I can see Alex everything will be all right" or words to that effect.⁴³

But, despite the fact that he served as an envoy, von Rentlen and his escorts were taken prisoner by the Allies.

Although the first attempt at making official contact with the British had failed, von Pannwitz still planned to withdraw and surrender in the British zone. The retreat of the Cossacks from the Balkans began with the removal of the 1st Division from its positions along a line stretching from Sokolova-Koprivnic-Dran on May 3 and 4. The 1st Division, commanded by Colonel Constantine Wagner, marched day and night, heading for the British troops who were still moving eastward in Austria. While the 1st Division marched, the 2nd Division held a defensive position for two days, covering the 1st's withdrawal. The 2nd Division, commanded by Colonel Schultz, had then to fight a bitter rearguard action to hold off partisan forces, while trying desperately to reach Austria and the safety of the Austrian-occupied zone.⁴⁴ While this desperate attempt to reach safety was going on, at 11.00 a.m., on May 8, 1945, German forces on all fronts capitulated.

The cessation of hostilities for all German forces did not affect the plans of the Cossack Corps. The corps and its German cadre continued to move toward the sponsored safety of the British zone battling against both Tito's partisans and the Bulgarian units which sustained the final Soviet attack westward. Hence, repeated

demands from partisan troops to surrender were ignored, and the Cossacks' units continued to fight their way to the British zone. Division elements continued their fight to reach the British zone until May 13, 1945 – a full five days after the German troops had officially surrendered.⁴⁵

The first official contact that occurred between the corps and the British was initiated by the latter. Reacting to reports that there was continued fighting between the Cossacks and Tito's partisans, the British flew Major Charles Villiers, a British liaison officer with Tito's forces, out of Yugoslavia, and sent him to the area where the Cossacks and Yugoslavs were still fighting. His orders from the Eighth Army Commander, General Sir Richard McCreery, were simply "Your Jugs (Yugoslavs) won't stop fighting; go and see about it." Villiers left Klagenfurt, Austria by jeep, with only a white bedsheet tied to the aerial to announce his intentions, and somewhere between Volkermarkt and Wolfsberg he found Cossack units. Asking for their commander, he was taken to a farmhouse which served as the headquarters for General von Pannwitz.

Though von Pannwitz sought to surrender the corps conditionally, it soon became obvious that there was no latitude for negotiations. The British expected full and unconditional surrender. Obviously with Germany out of the war (from May 8, 1945) von Pannwitz had no choice. Besides, the Yugoslav partisans had crossed the Austrian border and were continuing to harry the Cossack troops. Arrangements were made to effect a surrender. Von Pannwitz left his headquarters the next day (May 10) and contacted the nearest British unit, the 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps, commanded by Major Henry Howard. Von Pannwitz indicated his intention to surrender, but sought the assistance of the British in protecting his men, once disarmed, from the Yugoslavs. With the agreements made, von Pannwitz prepared to disarm and surrender his troops.⁴⁶

The surrender, however, was not without the touch that was characteristic of Pannwitz. As he wrote to his wife:

I permitted the division [the 1st Division] one last full review. First came the drum and bugle corps and then the three cavalry regiments, the men all wearing their fur hats and riding six abreast. It was order right in the middle of chaos and disorder. I could hardly hold back the tears as I realized this was the last time for such a review and that in a short time all that I had accomplished was gone. The Prinz Eugen march was the last

THE COSSACK DIVISION IN COMBAT

march played by the drum and bugle corps and then the Cossacks corps was dead.⁴⁷

Two hours after the review the Cossacks laid down their arms (although the officers were allowed to keep their sidearms) and began to move under British escorts to their assigned camps. The Cossack Corps had ceased to exist.

REQUIEM FOR THE COSSACK CORPS

Von Pannwitz: You know my opinion Schultz, the English are neither blind nor stupid. They know the value of seasoned and loyal eastern troops in a possible campaign against the Soviets ...

Schultz: I fear the Kremlin knows this much better. It cannot afford to let such a lesson stand. It must obliterate it. Neither Churchill nor Truman will go against their good ol' Uncle Joe for a handful of Cossacks.

(Conversation between Colonel Schultz and
General von Pannwitz, April, 1945)

The rapid collapse of German armed forces on all fronts found the Cossacks and the assigned German cadre somewhat scattered. Von Pannwitz had attempted to extricate all Cossack units from the Balkans, but while he was largely successful, the rather hasty retreat scattered the Cossack units in several locations throughout Austria. Von Pannwitz and his staff had their headquarters in an area close to Althofen, Austria, together with the 3rd Regiment (Kuban), 4th Regiment (Kuban), 5th Regiment (Don), 6th Regiment (Terek) and the 8th Regiment (dismounted). All of these units were 2nd Division elements, with the exception of the 4th Kuban. The majority of the 1st Cossack Division, including the 1st Don and the 2nd Siberian Regiments, under the command of Colonel Constantin Wagner, were camped further west near Feldkirchen.¹ General Kononov's command was situated near Klein St Paul but Kononov himself had left his troops to offer the corps services to the Vlasov army. General Domanov's *Kazachi Stan* was billeted close to Lienz, Austria.²

The now defunct Cossack Corps had groped and fought its way to the British zone, not only to escape the pro-Soviet partisans and the Bulgarian army, but to offer its services for what seemed to be the

next logical phase of the war – the battle between the Soviet Union and the Western powers.

The idea of the Western powers going to war against the Soviets was a recurring theme in Germany, particularly during the last year of the war. It was, to some extent, wishful thinking on the part of a dying nation grasping for straws, but it was also based on the sincere belief, in both German and anti-Bolshevik circles, that the Western powers would soon realize that their true enemy was world Communism and would turn against the Soviets. In such a situation the Western powers would utilize the invaluable support of the seasoned *Wehrmacht* and its eastern legions and would smash once and for all the world Communist threat.³

In the days following the surrender of the Cossack Corps, General von Pannwitz tried repeatedly to obtain some type of assurance from the British that his men, both German and Cossack, would remain safe in Western captivity. He implored his captors either to utilize the Cossacks as an organized military unit or to hand them over to the Americans. In every instance, in dealing with their captives, the British army was very correct and polite, but was by and large non-committal about the future of the Cossacks. The traditional responses given seemed to say "wait until an official decision has been made".

In reality, however, the decision for the Cossacks, Caucasians, Georgians, and a myriad of displaced persons of Soviet nationality, had already been made at a place called Yalta. In the closing phases of the Second World War, early February, 1945, to be exact, representatives of the major Allied powers met at Yalta to conclude the final strategy and the necessary agreements which would bring to a close the war in Europe. Among the problems to be resolved was the Soviet demand for the immediate return of all Soviet prisoners of war and any displaced persons of Soviet nationality caught up in the Western theatre of operations. According to the draft agreement submitted by the Soviet government: "All Soviet citizens liberated by the allied armies and British subjects liberated by the Red army will without delay after their liberation, be separated from enemy prisoners of war and will be maintained separately from them in camps or points of concentration until repatriation."⁴

Further details in the final agreement between the British and Soviet governments required the British to cooperate actively with the Soviet authorities in identifying liberated Soviet citizens and, where practicable, in transporting them to Soviet authorities. The agreement made no provision for the wishes of the individuals being

repatriated. It simply reinforced Moscow's position that all former Soviet citizens would be returned to Soviet authorities, regardless of their wishes.⁵ Therefore, negotiations between Moscow and the other Allied powers had already sealed the fate of von Pannwitz and his Cossacks. All that remained was ascertaining the degree of flexibility that the British would exercise in implementing the agreements.

Domanov's Cossacks ultimately surrendered to 36th Infantry Brigade and were placed under the guard of the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the 5th Buffs. It is difficult to say how many Cossacks were in the charge of the Highlanders in the Drau Valley between Lienz and Oberdrauburg, but the estimate runs from 30,000 to 35,000. Domanov's group, together with approximately 14,000 men from the Cossacks' Training Regiment, under the command of Cossack General Andrei Shkuro, waited impatiently for a final decision concerning their future.⁶

Roughly 75 miles to the east, the British 6th Armoured Division had made the first contact with the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, in the person of Colonel von Rentlen and his escorts. Von Pannwitz himself, however, handled the actual surrender of the Cossack Corps in a brief meeting held at a farmhouse between Volkermarkt and Wolfsberg, Austria. Once the surrender was completed, with a few negotiations and no conditions, the Cossack Corps surrendered to the British Eighth Army on the outskirts of Volkermarkt. After the men were disarmed, the General, his staff and most of the 2nd Division's units were bivouacked in an area around Althofen. Colonel Constantin Wagner and the main part of the 1st Division camped in the field around Feldkirchen.⁷

During the days which followed the corps' surrender, von Pannwitz made every effort to ensure that his men would remain in the custody of the Western powers. He repeatedly contacted every available ranking British officer and attempted to have his Cossack army transferred to the control of the Western powers. Despite all his optimism (whether real or assumed) by mid-May it was becoming obvious that the Cossacks were going to be handed over to the Soviets.

Many of the German cadre continued to hope that there would be a change of heart by the British and that the corps might survive. Had they known of the full provision of the Yalta agreements, they might have realized how futile any hopes were. In a sense the process of surrendering the corps to Soviet authorities began on May 26, 1945, when von Pannwitz was informed that he was

deprived of his command. Once this was done he and the other 834 Germans attached to the corps were placed under arrest. Through this action the Germans were split off from the corps since as German soldiers they were to be returned to their homes as quickly as possible after the cessation of hostilities (under the provisions of the Geneva Convention). Following this action there were many escapes from the two camps where the corps was bivouacked. The British action was simply too ominous to ignore.

General von Pannwitz and a number of the German officer cadre were surrendered to the NKVD at Judenburg, Austria, on May 28, 1945.⁸ The Cossack units encamped at Althofen were informed that they would be moved to Italy on May 26, 1945. The British army loaded the Cossacks into a virtual armada of trucks and proceeded to take them to Judenburg. There they turned the Cossacks over to the NKVD and an uncertain fate.⁹

Kononov's 5th Don Cossack regiment, which was located at Klein St Paul, suffered a similar fate on May 28. Left under the command of a Lieutenant-Colonel Borisov they too were taken to Judenburg and into the hands of the NKVD. The remainder of the regiment suffered a similar fate on May 30.¹⁰

Colonel Constantin Wagner's 1st Division elements were by and large dealt with in an open and ethical fashion. On May 27th Wagner was told to prepare his (approximately) 10,000 men for a transfer to a wire-enclosed camp. Wagner called von Pannwitz and warned him of what was about to happen. He also informed the senior Cossack officer in his regiment, Major Vladimir Ostrovsky. Once he had informed them of their bleak future, he secured his mount and escaped.¹¹

Throughout the tragic days of late May, 1945, the 6th Armoured Division showed considerable distaste for the whole affair of repatriation, and were determined not to use deception, simply to do their duty, no more and no less.

It was Major Ostrovsky's duty to maintain order and discipline as the remaining officers and men of the 1st Division elements awaited their fate. These Cossacks, without their German cadre, and now commanded by Major Ostrovsky, were moved under heavy guard to Weitensfeld, Austria. Here they were segregated into officer and enlisted cages. It was not until the morning of May 29 that the British officially announced to all the imminent return of the Cossacks to Soviet authorities. For the next several hours there was a confrontation between the Cossacks and the British, with the former simply refusing to obey British commands voluntarily to

enter lorries and proceed to Soviet captivity. Recognizing the futility of resistance, however, the Cossacks eventually boarded the British lorries and proceeded toward the repatriation point.¹²

Again, the 6th Armoured personnel did not in any way approve of their unpleasant task, and at the last minute, – even while the lorries were proceeding east – someone in the division headquarters noted the particulars of the Yalta Agreement, i.e., that only individuals who were citizens of the Soviet Union after September 1, 1939 had to be repatriated.¹³ Once this word had been received, the British began processing all of the Cossacks who were still in the vicinity. Some 50 officers were found to be *émigrés* who had left Russia between 1917–21 and who, therefore, had never been Soviet citizens. These men, all officers, were returned to Weitensfeld and were not repatriated. The majority of the 1st Division elements were turned over to the Soviet authorities, but at least the 6th Armoured made some attempt to screen their prisoners. Furthermore, they refused to hand over the women of the camp – wives and daughters – who had followed the retreating Cossack columns westward.¹⁴

The final and perhaps most tragic episode was what happened to the members of the Cossack nation (*Kazachi Stan*) camped close to Lienz, Austria. In essence, a band of refugees who had left their homeland in late 1942/early 1943, these Cossacks had been moved repeatedly since their departure with the retreating *Wehrmacht* following the Stalingrad disaster. Following their surrender, the Cossacks had organized themselves, and through General Domanov's leadership, a peaceful and orderly life had developed. In fact, from the original surrender on May 8, 1945 until May 27, the Cossacks were allowed to keep their arms.¹⁵

Throughout Western Europe the provisions of Yalta were being implemented and on May 28 the process caught up with the members of *Kazachi Stan*. On the morning of May 28, 1945 the officer corps were loaded into vehicles and transported to the Austrian village of Spittal. General Domanov, who had left by car separately from the main body of the Cossack officers, arrived late in the evening and met with his fellow officers. In halting speech he informed them that the British would transport them to Judenburg, Austria, the next day and would turn the Cossacks over to Soviet authorities.¹⁶

At 6.30 a.m., on the morning of May 29, 1945, British vehicles arrived at the Cossack billets and prepared to transport the prisoners. At first, the Cossacks did not go willingly, refusing to

REQUIEM FOR THE COSSACK CORPS

enter the British vehicles, but after a rather spirited struggle the Cossack officers began to board the British lorries. General Krasnov, aged and ailing, was carried to one of the vehicles by the younger Cossacks and was permitted to sit in the cab with the driver.¹⁷

During the period May 28–29, 1945, between 1,500 and 2,000 Cossack and Caucasian officers were handed over to Soviet authorities by the British army. Several dozen, fully realizing that they were going to their deaths, committed suicide rather than having to face the NKVD. Included in the number that went into the hands of the NKVD were the famous “White generals” Peter Krasnov and Andrei Shkuro. The irony of the situation was grasped by a Soviet lieutenant-colonel who told one of his subordinates: “They’re a grand lot the English, ... They give Shkuro their decoration, called after some saints, Michael and George, I think it was. Now if you please they’re quite happy to deliver him to our door.”¹⁸ There still remained the enlisted men and their families and the remnants of the Cossack nation.

On the morning of May 29 a British officer brought a prepared statement which indicated that the officers would not be returning to the camp. He also announced the intent of the British government to return all Cossacks to the Soviet Union. The forced loading of prisoners began on June 1 and continued through the next day. By that time the majority of the Cossacks in the Drau Valley had been loaded into trucks and transported to Soviet authorities. The British succeeded in turning over approximately 22,502 Cossacks and Caucasians to the Soviets during this period.¹⁹ The repatriation process, however, did not stop with the activities on May 30–June 2. British patrols continued to search the surrounding area for the remainder of the month, picking up hundreds of stragglers who had succeeded in escaping. For the majority of the Cossack corps repatriation was an accomplished fact.

The role of the Western Allies in repatriating the volunteer legions and the displaced persons from the Soviet Union will probably be a topic of discussion and criticism for many years. Whether the Western Allies should have willingly agreed to hand over all persons of Soviet nationality without any screening of their individual wishes is at best questionable. What is certain, however, is that the whole issue of repatriation was clouded when some of the provisions of the Yalta Agreement were ignored. The agreements on repatriation were in fact clear: the British government was only required to hand over individuals who were citizens of the Soviet

Union on or after September 1, 1939.²⁰ In spite of this provision they repatriated hundreds, even thousands, of people who should not have been returned to the Soviet Union.

Some Cossacks escaped this regrettable "military" operation. General V.G. Naumenko and Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, who were both members of the Cossack *Hauptverwaltung* in Munich, were in the American zone and eluded capture. Both men and their family survived. (Nazarenko was Naumenko's son-in-law.) General Kononov and his aide had gone to offer the services of the Cossack Corps to General Vlasov's liberation army. When the German collapse occurred they began making their way out of Germany and ultimately settled in Australia.²¹ As the Cossacks were being rounded up and repatriated, hundreds managed to escape, but the bulk of the corps and the Cossack nation went into what Solzhenitsyn called the "turbid streams of our sewage system" (the labour camps).²²

The leadership of the Cossack Corps, both German and Cossack, perished in the hands of the NKVD. Moscow announced in 1947 that General Helmuth von Pannwitz, General Peter Krasnov and General Andrei Shkuro had all been sentenced to death, and had been hanged. With them perished the general officers of the corps, together with a large number of the higher-ranking officers. The remaining officers and enlisted ranks either perished in the labour camps or were released from captivity after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Very few of those who survived the camps, however, succeeded in reaching the West.²³

In retrospect, the Cossack Division, the Cossack Corps and the Cossack nation are examples of unique episodes in the history of the Second World War and of National Socialist Germany, that are deserving of far more study. The Cossack recruitment is unique because it clearly indicates the extent to which German ideology could be warped and stretched in order to meet the needs of the state, i.e., manpower for the German army. It illustrates that these ideological aberrations were not only a product of the *Wehrmacht*, but were sanctioned by Hitler and Himmler as well. Furthermore, it serves to show how the shortsighted and inhuman rape of the occupied eastern territories could have been replaced by a more liberal and enlightened policy of establishing self-governing regions and enlisting the Soviet nationalities in an attempt to destroy Bolshevism.²⁴ Self-serving as they undoubtedly were, German policies towards the Cossacks nevertheless point to what could have been.

REQUIEM FOR THE COSSACK CORPS

From another perspective, it is possible to see the actions of the Cossacks as the concluding chapter of the Russian civil war which had started in 1917. Once the German invasion of Russia began, on June 22, 1941, Cossacks from all over Eastern and Western Europe volunteered to fight. Some, like Krasnov and Shukuro, were ranking general officers who had never totally given up their desire to liberate their homeland from Bolshevism.

With the loss of their unique identity and many traditional privileges, acquired during the past 300 years, the Cossacks had suffered a bitter blow. When the Germans arrived in 1941-42, allowing local self-government, traditional military formations and the abolition of the collective and state farm systems, many Cossacks were ready to fight with them against Bolshevism.

As a military force they fought well and consistently received praise from the Germans. But despite their successes, all of their bravery and courage could not change the fact that the war could not be won by the Germans, given their poor planning and the inhumane civil administration. The Cossacks in field grey, who disappeared into the labour camps in 1945 took with them the remnants of a unique way of life. It will never again be resurrected.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Jürgen Thorwald, *The Illusion: Soviet Soldiers in Hitler's Armies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975), p. 314. Originally published as *Die Illusion* by Droemer Knaur Verlag, Schoeller & Co., 1974.
2. George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1952).
3. Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1957).
4. Sven Steenberg, *Vlasov* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970). Originally published as *Wlassow, Verräter oder Patriot* by Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1968.
5. Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler: Memoir of the Russian Liberation Movement* (New York: The John Day Company, 1973). Originally published as *Gegen Stalin und Hüler, General Wlassow und die russische Freiheitsbewegung* (Mainz: Hase und Köhler), 1970.
6. Jürgen Thorwald, *Wen Sie Verderben Wollen ... Bericht des Grossen Verrats* (Stuttgart: Steingrüben Verlag, 1952).
7. General Reinhard Gehlen, *The Service* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1972). Originally published as *Der Dienst: Erinnerungen, 1942-1971*, by Hase und Köhler, 1971.
8. Hans von Herwarth and S. Frederick Starr, *Against Two Evils* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1981). Though primarily written by a German and concerning German history, this book was published first in English, a language for which the author had a deep appreciation, even before the Second World War.
9. Lord Nicholas Bethel, *The Last Secret* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).
10. Jules Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul* (Old Greenwich: Devin Adair, 1973).
11. Wolfgang Schwarz, *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes* (Esslingen: Bechtle Verlag, 1976).
12. Eric Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken* (Neckargemünd: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1963).
13. N.N. Krasnov, *The Hidden Russia* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1960).
14. V.G. Naumenko, *Vyelikoye Predatelstvo* (New York: Vseslavnyanskoye Izdatelstvo, 1970).
15. A letter from George M. Gubaroff to the author, September 8, 1975.
16. The office of *General der Osttruppen*, General of the Eastern Troops, was created in 1943 to deal with the special problems created by German usage of Soviet volunteers.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Neither Marx nor Trotsky were practising Jews, a fact which Hitler ignored.
2. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1943), Sentry edn, pp. 654-5.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-6.

4. Hitler's consistence on the Jewish origins of Marxism is amazing. Even after the purges of the 1930s, when the Jewish element in the Soviet government was eliminated, Hitler's belief in the Jewish control of the Soviet state never changed.
5. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp. 659-61.
6. The concept of the results of the Slavization of Austria runs through the early chapters of *Mein Kampf*. This was due to Hitler's experiences in growing up in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his experiences as a young man in Vienna. Note particularly pp. 15, 38, 93-95, 158-9 of the Sentry edn.
7. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 138.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-40.
9. The sources of Hitler's ideas of Slavs, Jews and Western civilization in general are discussed by a number of scholars. For example, see Werner Maser, *Hitler: Legende, Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (München, 1971); Joachim Fest, *Hitler* (New York, 1975); and Eugene Davidson, *The Making of Adolf Hitler* (New York, 1977).
10. Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks* (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1939), pp. 39-43.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46. There is no way to validate this lecture or Hitler's comments through others present. However, I feel comfortable with utilizing the source since the comments are totally in keeping with Hitler's philosophy on Russia.
12. Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks*, pp. 45, 46.
13. Adolf Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations 1941-44* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), p. 3.
14. Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations*, pp. 150-1. Some would question the use of Hitler's comments from 1941-44 as an indication of his plans for Russia. Hitler's biographers, however, note a very important fact concerning his personality: he changed his ideas on key issues very little, if at all, from 1919 until 1945. This factor of his personality is discussed in detail in Alan Bullock's *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) and Fest's *Hitler*.
15. Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations*, pp. 150, 151.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
17. Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, p. 4.
18. Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, p. 4.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
20. Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, p. 467.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
22. Hitler, *Secret Conversations*, p. 13.
23. Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: The Establishment of the New Order* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1974), p. 330.
24. Percy E. Schramm, et al. (eds.), *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtführungsstab), 1940-45*, 4 vols in 7 parts (Frankfurt a/M: Bernard und Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1961-65) Vol. I, pp. 203-5.
25. The briefing to the senior staff is mentioned in Halder's notes, included in Generaloberst Halder's *Kriegstagebuch* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1962-64), Vol. II, pp. 318-20 and Hitler/Ob. Kom. d. Heeres, Chef D. General Stabes, General-Quartiermeister, "March 18, 1941. Captured German Documents", microcopy T-120, roll 738, frame 366480.
26. *Herrenvolk* is a term often used by German ideologists of the period. It indicates the upper ruling classes as compared to the *Untermensch*, the subhumans.
27. Percy Schramm, *Hitler: The Man and the Military Leader* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 100-2.
28. The S.S. (*Schutzstaffel* or guard echelon) was a National Socialist entity which originally functioned as Hitler's bodyguard. It soon branched out, developing sections to research and maintain racial standards, guard and administer concentration camps, and maintain the security of the Reich. During the war it expanded into the *Waffen S.S.* which produced a number of elite divisions.

29. The *Ostministerium* was the ministry for eastern occupied territories, headed by Alfred Rosenberg. The *Ostministerium* was supposed to administer the occupied territories once they were no longer a part of the fighting zone. However, this proved to be more theory than fact since almost every governmental or military entity had more authority than Rosenberg. For a further discussion of this issue, see chapter 3.
30. Himmler's feelings concerning Slavic peoples are well-documented in a number of sources. For examples, see his address to the Major Generals of the S.S. in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Office of the Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Washington, 1948), Vol. 4, pp. 570–2, and Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf* (Stuttgart, 1967). For an understanding of Rosenberg's ideas, see Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts: Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltungskämpfe unserer Zeit* (München: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1943) and *The Memoirs of Alfred Rosenberg* (Chicago, 1949), pp. 270–2, and an *Ostministerium* Memorandum, *Betrifft UdSSR in Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal* (Nuremberg, 1949), Vol. XXVI, pp. 547–54.
31. The *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW) was the High Command of all German armed forces, dominated entirely by Hitler after 1941.
32. Walter Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1964), pp. 111, 112.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
34. Wilhelm Keitel, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command* (New York: Stein & Day, 1966), p. 122.
35. Keitel, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Keitel*, p. 122. Keitel claimed he did this though the writer has not seen any actual evidence of the fact.
36. Paul Carell, *Hitler Moves East* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1964), p. 19. While the offensive was the mightiest in 1941, it has since been exceeded by the 1944–45 Soviet offensive and by the Allied Normandy Invasion.
37. Matthew Cooper, *The German Army 1933–1945: Its Political and Military Failure* (New York: Stein & Day, 1978), p. 55.
38. Paul Carell, *Hitler Moves East*, p. 55.
39. For example, by noon of the first day, 1,200 Russian aircraft had been damaged or destroyed; three-quarters of them on the ground. By the end of the same day, 1,489 Russian craft had been destroyed at the cost of only 35 German planes. At the end of the campaign's fifth day, the tally had risen to 3,820 Russian machines destroyed. Alexander Boyd, *The Soviet Airforce Since 1918* (New York: Stein & Day, 1977), pp. 110–11.
40. Kenneth Macksey, *Guderian, Creator of the Blitzkrieg* (New York: Stein & Day, 1975), p. 134.
41. Alan Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian–German Conflict, 1941–45* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1965), pp. 51–2.
42. Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian–German Conflict, 1941–45*, pp. 52–3.
43. Albert Kesselring, *Kesselring: A Soldier's Record* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1954), pp. 99–103.
44. George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, p. 3.
45. *Schwerpunkt* (or point of concentration) was in many respects a cardinal principle of *Blitzkrieg*. *Schwerpunkt* called for the concentration of a maximum of firepower and men into the limited area of attack. It required strong concentrations of tanks and airpower for success.
46. Cooper, *The German Army 1933–1945*, p. 270.
47. Franz Halder, *The Halder Diaries: The Private War Journals of Colonel General Franz Halder* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976), p. 1000. Furthermore, in a letter to Fräulein Luise Benda, who would later become Frau Jodl, Halder stated on July 3, 1941: "The Russians have lost this war in the first eight days, their casualties both in

NOTES

dead and equipment losses are unimaginable." Franz Halder to Luise Benda, July 3, 1941, a letter supplied to the writer by Dr Harold Deutsch, U.S. Army War College.

48. Ibid., p. 1001.
49. Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York: Ballantine Books, n.d.), p. 124.
50. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1170.
51. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1170.
52. Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-1945*, pp. 283-4.
53. Keitel, *Memoirs*, pp. 171-72.
54. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1235.
55. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1468.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945*, pp. 114-19.
2. The *Abwehr*, headed by Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, was the chief intelligence agency of the German High Command.
3. Interrogation of Colonel Erwin Stolz by the International Military Tribunal on November 30, 1945 in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. II, pp. 477, 478.
4. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, pp. 114-16.
5. Colonel Erwin Stolz, Aussagen des Obersten der deutschen Wehrmacht Stolz, Erwin, gewesenen Stellvertretenden Chefs der Abteilung Abwehr II in Amt Ausland/Abwehr in OKW., National Archives, Nürnberg Document USSR-231.
6. Carell, *Hitler Moves East*, p. 34.
7. Wilhelm Prüller, *Diary of a German Soldier* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), p. 66.
8. Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader* (New York: Ballantine Books, n.d.), p. 156.
9. Heinrich Haape, *Moscow Tram Stop: A Doctor's Experiences with the German Spearhead in Russia* (London: St James Place, 1957), p. 51.
10. Hans von Herwarth and Frederick Starr, *Against Two Evils* (New York: Rawson Wade Publishers, 1981), p. 113.
11. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 221-6, 333-6, 525-35.
12. Sven Steenberg, *Vlasov* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970), p. 172-74. Some would question that what happened to Vlasov was all that unusual in Stalin's Soviet Russia. While I agree that a visit from the NKVD was not that unusual, it seemed to be the catalyst for Vlasov. He related this in private conversations to German friends.
13. Roy Laird, *Soviet Paradigm: An Experiment in Creating a Mono-hierarchical Polity* (New York: Free Press, 1970).
14. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation V-VII* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 16.
15. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago V-VII*, p. 16.
16. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago I-II*, pp. 243-46.
17. Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler: Memoir of the Russian Liberation Movement* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 34.
18. SMERSH is the acronym used for the Soviet counter-intelligence agency during the Second World War.
19. This unique attitude toward the returning prisoner is mentioned by a number of authors. See Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 493, 494; and Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago I-II*, pp. 244-8.
20. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 21, 22.
21. Reinhard Gehlen, *The Service: The Memoirs of General Reinhard Gehlen* (New York: World Publishing, 1972), p. 89.

22. Gehlen, *The Service*, pp. 80-1.
23. Interrogation of General Ernst Köstring by the Historical Interrogation Commission, Aug. 30-31, 1945, pp. 8-9, Lt-Col. O.J. Hale, Officer in Charge, National Archives.
24. Dr Heinrich Haape, *Moscow Tram Stop*, p. 164.
25. Gehlen, *The Service*, p. 81.
26. George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, p. 48.
27. Gehlen, *The Service*, p. 82.
28. Interrogation of General Ernst Köstring, p. 8.
29. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 45-7.
30. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 48, 49.
31. Interrogation of General Ernst Köstring, p. 9.
32. Prüller, *Diary of a German Soldier*, p. 69.
33. Prüller, *Diary of a German Soldier*, p. 84.
34. Eric von Manstein, message to the 42nd division, November 20, 1941, Kriegstagebuch No. IC 356/41 in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supp. A., pp. 826-7.
35. Ernst Köstring, "Commentary on the Report of Dr Seraphim concerning Turkic Units", in *Eastern Nationals as Volunteers in the German Army* (Department of the Army, 1948), p. 93, unpublished manuscript, US National Archives, Washington, D.C.
36. Ralph Heygendorf, "Commanding Foreign Peoples", in *Eastern Nationals as Volunteers in the German Army* (Department of the Army, 1948), p. 50, unpublished manuscript, National Archives.
37. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 72-3.
38. Köstring, Commentary on the Report of Dr Seraphim, p. 95.
39. Hans Seraphim, "Caucasian and Turkic Volunteers in the German Army", in *Eastern Nationals as Volunteers in the German Army* (Department of the Army, 1948), pp. 13-14, unpublished manuscript, National Archives.
40. Keitel, *Memoirs*, pp. 135-6; Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, p. 21.
41. Hermann Reinecke, order regarding the treatment of Russian P.O.W.s in *International Military Tribunal, Record of the Nuremberg Trials 14 November 1945 - October 1946* (Nuremberg: Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1947-49) Vol. XXII, p. 472.
42. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 26-7.
43. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 162.
44. Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978), pp. 9, 296-300.
45. A detailed discussion of the German position on this issue is found in Hans Roschmann, *Gutachten zur Behandlung und zu den Verlusten Sowjetischen Kriegsgefangener in deutscher Hand von 1941-1945 und Zur Bewertung der Beweiskraft des sogenannten Documents No. KW2125 (Nachweisung des Vertriebs der Sowjetischer Kriegsgefangenen nach dem Stande Vom 1.5. 1944)* (Ingolstadt: Zeitgeschichtliche Forschungsstelle Ingolstadt, 1982).

CHAPTER THREE

1. While not truly an "organized group", it is intriguing that a number of this group later participated in the organized movement to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944. Among those actively involved in the July 20 conspiracy were Oberst Claus Von Stauffenberg and Oberst Alexis Von Roenne.
2. George Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin: A Case Study in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 16-17.

3. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 31-4.
4. This change in Gehlen's attitude is cited in his post-war memoirs but is not supported by other sources. Since, however, the policies he pursued from 1942-45 seem to validate this change, I have used Gehlen's post-war testimony.
5. Gehlen, *The Service*, pp. 73-9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
7. While Gehlen cites such conversations in his memoirs, they are not mentioned anywhere in Halder's diaries. This is probably not a contradiction since Halder mentioned few such covert conversations and very little about volunteer legions.
8. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 35-9.
9. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 56-8.
10. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 39-41.
11. One could seriously question whether there was ever a "standard volunteer uniform". In reality, the standard was widespread variation. Throughout the war former Soviet soldiers wore a wide variety of uniforms. Note the variations shown in the illustrations.
12. Von Herwarth and Starr, *Against Two Evils*, pp. 219-20. Von Herwarth reports the issuance of Regulation 8000 but includes few details in his book. The order, however, was reprinted in its entirety in an OKH booklet entitled *Landeseigene Hilfskräfte im Osten*. This can be found in Records Group 242, Records of the National Archives, Collection of Foreign Records Seized, 1941-, pp. 2-44.
13. Gehlen, *The Service*, p. 83.
14. Herwarth and Starr, *Against Two Evils*, p. 220.
15. Final Interrogation Report on General Ernst Köstring by the Seventh Army Interrogation Commission, September 11, 1945, p. 2, Major Paul Kubala, M.I., Officer in Charge, National Archives.
16. Partial translation of document 1997 fs., decree of the Führer in, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. 4, pp. 634-6.
17. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 12-21.
18. *Reichsführer* of the S.S. Heinrich Himmler in a speech to the Major Generals of the S.S., October 4, 1943, in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. 4, p. 559.
19. The switch of Himmler and his S.S. from slaughtering and mistreating Soviets to recruiting them to fight with the S.S. is in itself a fascinating story. For clarification of his radical change and how it transpired, see Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head*, pp. 567-77 and George Stein, *Waffen SS* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 168-96.
20. Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks*, pp. 132-3.
21. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, p. 23.
22. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1247.
23. Alfred Rosenberg, memorandum to the Führer, March 16, 1942 in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supp. A., Document 045-PS, p. 335.
24. Alfred Rosenberg in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, supp. A., Document 045-PS, p. 336.
25. Haape, *Moscow Tram Stop*, p. 336. "Brownshirts" refers in this quotation to party or civilian administration, in some respects appropriate for Koch and his men. Rosenberg's staff actually wore a yellow uniform prompting the nickname "Golden Pheasants".
26. German strategy originally called for an advance into the Caucasus toward the Baku and Maikop oil fields and, after the Volga was secured, an advance toward Kazan. Through this plan, German units would have been able to attack Moscow from the south, skirting the major troop concentrations defending Moscow.
27. It seems that Hitler's and the High Command's judgement of the Stalingrad situation was prejudiced by the successes of supplying and relieving German forces cut off at Cholm and Demyansk in the winter of 1941-42. In both cases, the *Luftwaffe* supplied these isolated units until spring when fresh German attacks

resulted in their relief. The size of the units at Cholm and Demyansk, however, was in no way similar to that of the Sixth Army.

28. Halder, *The Halder Diaries*, p. 1468.
29. Ernst Köstring, Commentary on the Report of Dr Seraphim, p. 95.
30. Gehlen, *The Service*, pp. 77-8.
31. Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations*, p. 328.
32. Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, p. 183.
33. Interrogation of General Ernst Köstring, p. 8.
34. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 45-7.
35. Memorandum recording the discussion on Eastern policies between Hitler, Rosenberg, Keitel, Göring and Lammers at Führer Hauptquartier (Führer headquarters) on July 17, 1941. Reproduced in *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. XXVII, Document 221L, p. 88.
36. There are numerous examples of Hitler permitting considerable divergence from his views. For example, Hitler mocked and scorned the attempts of Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler and his followers to glorify the Germanic culture of pre-Roman Germany. Yet, he chose not to forbid it, even though it occupied a good amount of time and energy for certain elements within the S.S. While Himmler publicly condemned Charlemagne as a murderer of the Germans, Hitler spoke publicly and privately about the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, whom he regarded as one of the greatest German kings.
37. Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Conversations*, p. 339.
38. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, p. 293.
39. L.R. Kramarz, "Creation of volunteer units consisting of Russian prisoners of war", December 17, 1941, an Ostministerium memorandum to the German Foreign Office, National Archives, Document NG-4301.
40. Merkblatt from the Oberkommando des Heeres, August 1942, *Landeseigene Hilfskräfte im Osten*, Records Group 242, Records of the National Archives, Collection of Foreign Records Seized, 1941-, pp. 2-44.
41. Major Claus von Stauffenberg, Instructions No. 17, *General der Osttruppen*, Records of the German Army High Command (OKH), Captured German Documents, Microcopy T-78 roll-121, frames 6047659, 6047660 National Archives.
42. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, p. 75.
43. Eric von Manstein, Message to the 72nd division, November 20, 1941, Kriegstagebuch No. IC 356/41 in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Supp. A, p. 827.
44. Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, p. 183.
45. Clark, *Barbarossa*, pp. 322-32.
46. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 160-1.
47. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 173-6, Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 169-80.
48. Memorandum recording the discussion on Eastern policies reproduced in *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, Vol. XXXVIII, Document 221L, p. 88.
49. Peter Krasnov had written a number of books during the 1920s and 30s. Perhaps his best-known work was *From Double Eagle to Red Flag* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1929).
50. L.R. Kramarz, "Creation of Volunteer Units", National Archives, Document NG-4301.
51. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, p. 299.
52. Records on volunteer legions are a difficult historiographical problem. Some apparently were not properly recorded since they authorized the forbidden foreign legions. Other records were intentionally destroyed at the end of the war since many Germans did not want their new found "allies" to fall into Allied hands in an unfavourable situation.
53. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's Headquarters*, pp. 503-4.
54. Discussion of the situation at the Front at the Führer's headquarters on January 27,

NOTES

1945, transcription reproduced in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. VI, pp. 696-7.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Vassili G. Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks* (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1972), p. 3.
2. Bruce W. Menning, "The Emergence of a Military-Administrative Elite in the Don Cossack Land, 1708-1836" in Walter McKenzie Pink and Don Karl Rowney, *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society From the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
3. Albert Seaton, *The Cossacks* (Berkshire, England: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1972), Men-at-Arms Series, p. 7.
4. Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks*, pp. 2-3. Two Cossack writers of diverse political persuasions have published books on Cossack history within the last ten years. Both Vassili Glaskow and George Gubaroff (*Cossacks and their Land in the Light of New Data*, Buenos Aires: G.V. Karpenco, 1974) have published books citing the early origins of the Cossacks. Gubaroff's work was published in Russian and the English translation awaits a publisher.
5. William Allen, *The Ukraine: A History* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1941), pp. 71-2.
6. Glaskow, *History of the Cossacks*, pp. 16-17.
7. Phillip Longworth, *The Cossacks* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 14-15.
8. Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, p. 71; Albert Seaton, *The Cossacks* (Berkshire, England: Osprey Publishing, 1972).
9. Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, pp. 72-3.
10. The Oprichnina was established when Ivan IV, in 1564, split the country into two parts: the *Zemschina* or the public part (the kingdom proper); and the *Oprichnina*, land under his personal management. The reign of terror imposed by the Tsar's special group of *Oprichniki* and the looting done by this riff-raff caused many people to seek safety and refuge elsewhere.
11. Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1974), pp. 100-3.
12. Longworth, *The Cossacks*, p. 80.
13. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 16.
14. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, p. 155.
15. Menning, "The Emergence of a Military Administrative Elite", p. 134.
16. Allen, *The Ukraine*, pp. 187-8.
17. Allen, *The Ukraine*, pp. 173-99.
18. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 16; Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, p. 197.
19. Menning, "The Emergence of a Military Administrative Elite", p. 131.
20. John T. Alexander, *Emperor of the Cossacks: Pugachev and the Frontier Jacquerie of 1773-1775* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1973), pp. 19-220.
21. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, pp. 16, 17.
22. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 16. In order to reform the Zaporozhians with this new designation, Potemkin contacted the remnants who had settled in the Danube Delta (after Peter's destruction of the *Sech*) and were in the service of the Sultan. Some did return to serve in the Black Sea Host but others, distrusting Potemkin, remained in the Sultan's service. Consequently, in Catherine's second Turkish war (1790-91), Zaporozhians fought opposite each other in the Danube Delta Campaign. Allen, *The Ukraine: A History*, pp. 259-60.

23. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 18.
24. Menning, "The Emergence of a Military Administrative Elite", p. 147. Sergei Starikov and Roy Medvedev, *Phillip Mironov and the Russian Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 4-5.
25. Bruce W. Menning, "Russian Military Innovation in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century", *War and Society* (May 1984), Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 34.
26. Bruce W. Menning, *A.I. Chernyshev: A Russian Lycurgus*, an unpublished manuscript written by Dr Menning and given to the writer, September 27, 1984, pp. 1-2. The writer wishes to acknowledge the information provided by Dr Menning in this excellent manuscript which should be published.
27. Menning, *A.I. Chernyshev: A Russian Lycurgus*, pp. 11-16.
28. Menning, *A.I. Chernyshev: A Russian Lycurgus*, pp. 26-31.
29. Menning, *A.I. Chernyshev: A Russian Lycurgus*, p. 32.
30. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 23.
31. Starikov and Medvedev, *Phillip Mironov and the Russian Civil War*, p. 5.
32. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 23.
33. Ibid. The Cossack contribution to the Russian Cavalry continued even through the Second World War when the USSR had the world's largest cavalry force. The mounted Cossack appears even today for ceremonial occasions but the cavalry as a fighting force is now totally mechanized.
34. Starikov and Medvedev, *Phillip Mironov and the Russian Civil War*, pp. 9-10; Longworth, *The Cossacks*, p. 274.
35. The *nagaika* was a very distinctive weighted whip which the Cossacks used very effectively in suppressing civil disorders. For an excellent description of Cossack war equipment, see Seaton, *The Cossacks*, pp. 24-5; 33-4.
36. Menning, "The Emergence of a Military Administrative Elite in the Don Cossack Land, 1708-1836", p. 131.
37. Starikov and Medvedev, *Phillip Mironov and the Russian Civil War*, pp. 4, 5.
38. V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moskva: Gos.izd. Polit. Lit-ry, 1960), Vol. XIII, p. 373.
39. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 23.
40. Starikov and Medvedev, *Phillip Mironov and the Russian Civil War*, p. 12.
41. Cyril Falls, *The Great War 1914-1918* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), pp. 247-8.
42. Seaton, *The Cossacks*, p. 27.
43. Nova Zhizn, as cited in John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: The Modern Library, 1960), pp. 30-1.
44. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1932), Vol. I, pp. 102-9. I recognize the questionable reliability of Leon Trotsky's works, but it seems to me legitimate to cite him in this instance since he and most other contemporary writers note the sudden unreliability of the Cossacks.
45. Richard Lockett, *The White Generals* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 70-2.
46. Lockett, *The White Generals*, p. 68.
47. Ibid., p. 89.
48. N.N. Kukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917* abridged edn., trans. by T. Carmichael (New York: Oxford Press, 1955), pp. 617-19.
49. Lockett, *The White Generals*, pp. 99-101.
50. V.I. Lenin, *Sochinenii* (Leningrad, Partizdat, 1934), Vol. XXIX, p. 257.
51. Lockett, *The White Generals*, pp. 91-9.
52. Ibid., pp. 106-7.
53. Longworth, *The Cossacks*, p. 97.
54. *Inogorodni* means literally people from other towns. This term referred to non-Cossack peasants who had settled in Cossack territories, mainly since 1861.
55. Lockett, *The White Generals*, pp. 158-9.

56. Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 29-31.
57. Longworth, *The Cossacks*, pp. 306-7.
58. Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1919-1920*, pp. 312-15.
59. Longworth, *The Cossacks*, p. 309.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Some people mistake the issue of foreign weapons and equipment to volunteers by the Germans as a sign of second-rate status for the volunteer legions. This assumption is erroneous since the German army made use of captured weapons, including Yugoslavian, Czech, Polish and Austrian weapons for their front-line troops. In addition, German units used Soviet PPSH 41 submachine guns and Tokarev automatic rifles in large numbers. The available weapons were those with which the volunteers were often familiar. Later, when the 1st Cossack Division was organized, the Cossacks were issued and trained with German weapons.
2. Befehl über die Aufstellung von Kosaken-Zügen, Oberkommando des XXXVII. Panzerkorps, Records of the German Field Commands: Corps, captured German documents, microcopy T-314, roll 1158, frames 226-8, National Archives.
3. Aufstellung einer Kavallerie Regiment "Platow", 17. Armeekorps, Records of the German Field Commands: Armies, captured German documents, microcopy 312, roll 695, frame 9332117, National Archives.
4. Dubrovski battalion was not named after its founder but after Pushkin's fiery romantic character in his unfinished novel *Dubrovski El Bandido*. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, Blauvelt, New York, October 9, 1981.
5. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, Blauvelt, New York, October 9, 1981.
6. Longworth, *The Cossacks*, pp.234-42.
7. Kriegsstärkenanweisung, Kosaken Regiment "Platow", 17. Armeekorps, Records of the German Field Commands: Armies, captured German documents, microcopy T-312, roll 695, frames 9332114-8332123, National Archives.
8. Interview with Major Gunther Baumann, 5th Panzer Division, May 23, 1986; Anton Detlev von Plato, *Geschichte der 5. Panzerdivision* (Regensburg: Wahalla Verlag, 1978), pp.222-3. Von Rentlen continued his association with volunteers, and particularly Cossacks, until the end of the war. Colonel von Rentlen, a former Tsarist officer and member of one of the White armies, was repatriated in 1945 by the British and reportedly died in Russian captivity.
9. Bericht über Ostruppen, abt. Ia/Ic, 42. Armeekorps, Records of the German Field Commands: Corps captured German documents, microcopy T-314, roll 1012, frames 580-582, National Archives.
10. "Unsere Kosaken", *Die Wehrmacht*, Vol. VII, No.13 (June 13, 1943), pp.5, 6. The Cossack Regiment chosen for the basis of this article was Ivan Kononov's "Detachment 600".
11. General Heinz Hellmich, "Vortragsnotiz, Betrifft Ostruppen", an unpublished document in the National Archives, RG 238, Collection of Second World War War crimes, pp.3, 4.
12. Interview with Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 3, 1979, Blauvelt, New York.
13. In 1943, when the 1st Cossack division was organized, members of the division were issued a German Style *Soldbuch* (or paybook), the standard record book issued to all German military personnel. Nazarenko was issued Cossack *Soldbuch* 1, in honour of his long tradition of opposition to the Bolshevik regime. I personally read through this unique *Soldbuch*.

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945

14. *Volkdeutsche* was the term used by the Germans to describe inhabitants of the ethnic German communities throughout Europe, including Rumania, Hungary and the Soviet Union. The S.S. in particular recruited heavily from these communities.
15. Interview with Nazarenko, October 3, 1979.
16. Konstantin Cherkassov, ГЕHEPAЛ KOHONOB (Melbourne: TWSOPPOC "EΠHMEPHE" 1963), 120.
17. Peter J. Huxley-Blythe, *The East Came West* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1968), pp.14-17. Though this work lacks certain scholarly credentials, Mr Huxley-Blythe had the advantage of interviewing General Kononov and N.N. Krasnov before their deaths and General V. Naumenko before he reached advanced age and was placed in a nursing home. It is, therefore, a useful source.
18. General von Schenkindorff's support of Kononov's regiment is totally in character with other such actions by staff in the Army Group Centre. His recognition of the problems of attempting to defeat Russia by military means only is noted by Hans von Herwarth, Jürgen Thorwald and Wilfried Strik-Strikfeldt in previously cited works.
19. In his *Gulag Archipelago III* Solzhenitsyn cites the defection of Kononov and the Mogilev recruiting incident. He states that 4,000 of the 5,000 prisoners volunteered. Konstantin Cherkassov, however in ГЕHEPAЛ KOHONOB claims that all wanted to join.
20. Cherkassov, ГЕHEPAЛ KOHONOB, pp.126-130.
21. Ibid, pp.119-21.
22. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, p.48.
23. There are differing opinions about Kononov's origins and motivations. Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, who heads the Cossack War Veterans' Association claims that Kononov was not a Cossack and questions his sincerity in the liberation movement. Whilst genuinely respecting Nazarenko's position and noting it, the fact remains the Germans recognized Kononov as a Cossack. It appears that Kononov, due to his vision of himself as a leader in the movement for liberating Russia, may have antagonized others, causing a good deal of resentment.
24. Huxley-Blythe, *The East Came West*, p.19.
25. Memorandum including biographical material on the General A.O. Peter N. Krasnoff prepared by the *Geheime Staats-Polizei* (Gestapo), 15 März, 1938. Himmler file Document H/22/27, Imperial War Museum.
26. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, p.20.
27. As with other German policies on eastern people, the policies on *émigrés* were quite varied. For example in German-occupied Yugoslavia ex-Tsarist officer General Skorodumov was allowed to form the *Russki Korpus* (the Russian Corps). Called the *Werkschutz*, the corps included in excess of 6,000 *émigrés* from Yugoslavia. It was supported by the *Wehrmacht*, but saw service only in Yugoslavia. See the interrogation of Alexander von Mayer, National Archives Document NND 750122, pp.2, 3.
28. Interview with Nazarenko, October 4, 1979.
29. Himmler file of the Imperial War Museum, Document H/22/54.
30. Interview with Nazarenko, October 4, 1979. I have been unable to find any records to validate any official German support for Glaskow. A contemporary, Nicholas Nazarenko, has stated that Glaskow had Gestapo or S.S. ties, but no records have emerged to validate this claim; conversely his rhetoric indicates a strong tie to National Socialist ideology.
31. РЕЗОЛЮЦИЯ, КАЗАХИ ВЕСТНИК, August 22, 1941, p.2.
32. Speech by Vassili Glaskow, РЕЗОЛЮЦИЯ, August 22, 1941, p.2.
33. Interview with Nazarenko, October 4, 1979.
34. "Abzeichen für Kosakenverbände", an unpublished document from *Oberkommando des Heeres, Organisation Abteilung (II)* Nr. 10650/42, November 15, 1942, my collection.

NOTES

35. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp.69, 70.
36. Siusiukin would have been an extremely valuable source on activities with the Caucasus. Regrettably, when the British were preparing to repatriate all Cossacks in 1945, Siusiukin committed suicide. Given his long-standing tradition for opposing the Soviets, he knew his fate all too well.
37. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 3, 1979 and October 9, 1981, Blauvelt, New York.
38. Heinrich-Detloff von Kalben, "Generalleutnant Helmuth von Pannwitz und sein Kosakenkorps", *Deutscher Soldatenkalender*, 1962 (München-Lochhausen: Schild Verlag, 1962), pp.161-3.
39. F.W. von Mellenthin, *German Generals as I Saw Them* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), pp.41-3.
40. Mellenthin, *German Generals as I Saw Them*, p.43.
41. *Das Kosakentum* in the records of the Wannsee Institute, captured German documents microcopy T-175 Roll 270 frame 2765836, National Archives.
42. Herwarth and Starr, *Against Two Evils*, p.221.
43. Mellenthin, *German Generals As I Saw Them*, p.44.
44. Eric Kern, *General Pannwitz and seine Kosaken* (Neckargemünd: Kurt von Winckel Verlag, 1963), pp.44, 45.
45. Kalben, "Generalleutnant Helmuth von Pannwitz und sein Kosakenkorps", p.164.
46. Mellenthin, *German Generals As I Saw Them*, p.45.
47. Kern, *General Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, pp.47, 48.
48. The brief conversation on the Slavic people is mentioned by several former German soldiers, all of whom had at least second-hand knowledge of the event. Mellenthin, on p.46 of the previously-cited work, mentions the conversation, Kalben who was a close associate of von Pannwitz also mentions it (p.166), and Wolfgang Schwarz, *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes* (Esslingen: Bechtle Verlag, 1976), pp.83-94 discusses the conversations in detail.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 50.
2. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, pp. 51-4.
3. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, pp. 53-4.
4. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 1979, Blauvelt, New York.
5. National Archives, Captured German Documents, Microcopy T-78-121, Frame 6380673. Ironically, the unit file card citing the creation of the Cossack Division and noting the precursor unit (*Reiterverband Pannwitz*) is in the records of the *Eisenbahntruppen* (the Railway troops), not the regular combat troops of the *Wehrmacht*.
6. Alexander von Bosse, *The Cossack Corps* (Headquarters United States Army, Europe, Foreign Military Studies branch, 1950), an unpublished manuscript, pp. 6-7.
7. Heinrich-Dettloff von Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps: I, Aufstellung der 1 Kosaken Kavallerie Division, 1943", *Deutsches Soldaten Jahrbuch*, 1963 (Tettmang/Württemberg: Lorenz Senn Verlag, 1963), pp. 67-8.
8. Aufstellung, Verband First Cossack Division, Captured German Documents, Microcopy T 311, Roll 151, Records of Army Group A, Frame 198293, National Archives.
9. As an example, Sonderführer E. Lange questioned Nikolai Boyarski on April 9, 1943. He recorded the prisoner's nationality (Kuban-Kosak), prior to military

- service, his experience and that of his family with the secret police, and his desire (which Lange believed) to fight against the "Reds" in a Cossack Unit. Ibid., Frame 198320.
10. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 3, 1979, Blauvelt, New York.
11. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 59.
12. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 6.
13. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", p. 70.
14. Ibid., p. 68.
15. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 11.
16. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", p. 69.
17. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 9.
18. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", pp. 76-77.
19. Huxley-Blythe, *The East Came West*, pp. 26-8.
20. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 3, 1979, Blauvelt, New York. I remember, when with Nazarenko on October 3-5, 1979, the Colonel's pride at being invited to spend Pokrov (the feast of the intercession of the Holy Virgin, commemorating the relief of Constantinople), October 14, 1942, with Ataman Pavlov. After the Holy day, he also toured the "liberated" areas and the Cossack units with Pavlov.
21. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, pp. 6-7.
22. Ibid., p. 7.
23. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", p. 67.
24. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 4, 1979, Blauvelt, New York.
25. Ibid., October 3, 1979.
26. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 202.
27. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", p. 69.
28. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 8.
29. The Don Cossacks wore a wide red stripe, the Kuban a narrow red stripe, the Terek blue and the Siberians yellow. See Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 61 and Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", pp. 69-70.
30. As with the sleeve-shields, the *papacha* and *kubanka* utilized host colours for the very top which was cloth. The Don Cossacks wore red-topped *papacha* (with black wool), the Siberians, yellow-topped *papacha* (with white wool), the Kuban Cossacks red-topped *kubanka* (with black wool), the Terek Cossacks, light-blue-topped *kubanka* (with black wool). The tops were decorated with silver tressing in a cross design.
31. *Oberkommando des Heeres, Heeres-Verordnungsblatt* (Berlin: *Oberkommando des Heeres*, June 17, 1944), p. 182. Every Cossack soldier was distinguished by not only the unique headgear but a sleeve-shield indicating the identity of his Cossack host. The following colours were used:
 - 1st Don Cossack Regiment - dark blue and red shield;
 - 2nd Siberian Cossack Regiment - dark blue and yellow shield;
 - 3rd Kuban Cossack Regiment - black and red shield;
 - 4th Kuban Cossack Regiment - black and red shield;
 - 5th Don Cossack Regiment - dark blue and red shield;
 - 6th Terek Cossack Regiment - dark blue and black shield.
32. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 60-6.
33. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken-Kavallerie-Korps", p. 70 and Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 202.
34. William H. Greehey, "The German XVth Cossack Cavalry Corps, 1943-1945", *The Adjutant's Call: The Journal of the Military Historical Society* (1967), Vol. 5,

NOTES

No. 3.

35. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 9.
36. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Nazarenko, October 3, 1979, Blauvelt, New York. As an interesting sidelight, the Cossack Museum survived the war but its present whereabouts is unknown. Even though it was in Dresden in February of 1945 it survived the fire storm and was finally turned over to the U.S. Army.
37. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 10.
38. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
39. Schwarz, *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes*, p. 99.
40. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 13.
41. As the German army moved into southern Russia in 1941, there was an incident where *Wehrmacht* soldiers working with a Russian community, rebuilt their abandoned church and attended mass. When the German press picked up the story the Nazi party attacked this action bitterly. As a result, the *Wehrmacht* personnel were instructed not to attend Orthodox churches.
42. Even though the Russian-issue small arms were replaced with German, the Cossacks were allowed to retain some traditional weapons, notably the *kindjal* and *shashqua*. The *kindjal* was a dagger and the *shashqua* a hiltless cavalry sabre.
43. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 12.
44. Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) Nicholas Nazarenko, October 4, 1979, Blauvelt, New York.
45. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 12.
46. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, pp. 66-7.
47. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 17.
48. Kriegstagebuch/Kosak Division, Captured German Documents, Microcopy T 315 Roll 2281, Frame No. 1, National Archives.
49. Mellethin, *German Generals As I Saw Them*, p. 48.
50. Mellethin, *German Generals As I Saw Them*, pp. 47-8.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Major O.W. Müller Bericht nr. 7/44, "Erfassung und Rückführung der Kosaken in den Auffangraum im Gebiet Kamenez-Podolsk", February 22, 1944. Collection of Foreign Records seized, 1941-, Eap 99/1134, National Archives.
2. Partial translation of a decree of the Führer, Document - 1997fs in *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. 4, pp. 634-6.
3. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 48, 49.
4. The term *rayon* refers to the lowest administrative district in the Soviet governmental scheme.
5. Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, pp. 42, 43.
6. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 48, 49. Kaminsky was later transferred to the S.S. and became notorious due to his role in the suppression of the Warsaw uprising of 1944. He disappeared shortly after, probably assassinated by the S.S.
7. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, p. 95.
8. The best account on the organization of the self-governing region is in the report prepared by Sonderführer K. Siefers for the Commander of Army Group A on January 10, 1943. K. Siefers, "Das Versuchgebiet in Kuban-Kosaken-Raum, als Ausgangspunkt zur Klarlegung des gesamten Kosakenproblems". An uncatalogued document in the National Archives, pp. 1-3.
9. Ibid., pp. 21-3.
10. Ibid., p. 25.
11. The strength of a German regiment in the same period was approximately 3,000 men. Whether the Cossack units were comparable in actual numbers is not known.

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945

12. Siefers, "Das Versuchgebiet in Kuban-Kosaken-Raum", p. 34.
13. Ibid., p. 37.
14. "Anlage zu Kriegstagebuch, Nr. 5, Besondere Vorgänge" in Records of German Field Command: Armies (Part V), Microcopy T 312. The removal of the Cossacks and Georgians is related in detail in Item 27760, Roll 714, beginning with frame 8350770.
15. Alfred Rosenberg, "Meldung an den Führer, Betrifft: die Politische Betreuung der Angehörigen der Ostvölker", September 28, 1944. An unpublished document in the National Archives, document NO-2544, p. 3.
16. Good accounts of life in what the Cossacks referred to as the *Kazachy Stan* (Cossack settlement) are given in Josef Mackiewicz, *Kontra* (Paris, 1957), pp. 81-91 and V. Naumenko's *Vyelikoye predatelstvo* (New York: Vseslavianskoye Izdatelstvo, 1970), pp. 63-64.
17. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, pp. 220-2.
18. Ibid., p. 222-3.
19. Himmler's interest was detailed in a memorandum by Col. Grothman, July 15, 1944, on the training of the Cossacks, Himmler file document H/22/31, Imperial War Museum.
20. Ibid.
21. Major O.W. Müller, "Erfassung und Rückführung der Kosaken in den Auffangraum in Gebiet Kamenez-Podolsk", pp. 6, 7.
22. Ibid.
23. Huxley-Blythe, *East Came West*, p. 54.
24. Telegram from General Gottlob Berger to *Reichsführer* Himmler, dated July 30, 1944, Himmler file, document H/22/33, Imperial War Museum.
25. Message to the Berlin S.S. Office for fighting units from the office of S.S. General Globocnik dated July 28, 1944, Himmler file, document H/22/33, Imperial War Museum.
26. Nikolai Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal 1944-1947*, p. 152.
27. Documents in the Imperial War Museum's Himmler file, both H/22/33 and H/22/37 indicate this anti-partisan duty.
28. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal*, p. 153.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Ernst Köstring, *The People of the Soviet Union*, pp. 18, 19.
2. Huxley-Blythe, *East Came West*, pp. 28, 29.
3. Ibid., pp. 44, 45.
4. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941-1945*, p. 265.
5. *Jahrbuch der Weltpolitik*, 1944 (Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1944), pp. 200, 201. According to the *Kosaken Kurier* this proclamation was released by both the German and Cossack press on November 10, 1943. "Aufruf der deutschen Regierung", *Kosaken Kurier* (August/September 1952), p. 5.
6. Interview with Nazarenko, October 5, 1979.
7. Keitel's actual commitment to the Cossacks could be questioned, at least to some extent. Though he co-authored this significant document, he did not mention it or its significance in his post-war memoirs. In fact, he mentioned nothing about any of his dealings with eastern legions.
8. Report from the Cossacks and the *Hauptverwaltung* by General P.N. Krasnov to *Reichsführer* Himmler, *Reichsminister* Rosenberg and General Köstring, National Archives, Captured German Documents, Records Group 242, EAP 99/1205.
9. The *Hauptverwaltung* continued to function until the last days. The post-war *Kosaken Kurier* indicates its endurance until May 6, 1945 (*Kosaken Kurier* (August/

- September 1952)), p. 5, and Col. Nicholas Nazarenko confirms this fact from his experiences with the *Hauptverwaltung*.
10. To date, the best overall work which cites the role of the S.S. in recruiting foreign nationals is George Stein, *Waffen S.S.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 185-8. See also Basil Dmytryshyn, "The Nazis and the S.S. Volunteer Division Galicia", *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (February 1956), pp. 1-9.
11. Stein, *Waffen S.S.*, p. 234.
12. Letter from Berger to Himmler dated December 24, 1942. Himmler file, Document H/5/211, Imperial War Museum.
13. Memorandum by Berger defending his Cossack police proposal, dated July 1, 1943, Document H/5/212, Imperial War Museum.
14. Colonel Michael Schulajiw to Adolf Hitler, September 29, 1944, document H/22/45, Imperial War Museum.
15. *Ibid.*
16. As an example in his speech of October 14, 1943, Himmler attacked Vlasov calling him a "pig" and a "butcher boy". Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler, 1941-1945*, p. 193.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Recorded discussion between Grothman and Himmler dated July 15, 1945, Document H/22/31, Imperial War Museum.
19. When the First Cossack Division was formed, not all of the Cossack volunteer units were sent to Mielau to join the division. Until 1945, Cossack units existed on other parts of the front including France and on the eastern front. Furthermore, after the division was sent to Yugoslavia, some of the reserve elements were transferred to France.
20. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II as I Saw Them*, p. 49.
21. Memorandum on the meeting of August 26, 1944, by S.S. Lieutenant-Colonel Grothman. Document H/22/41, Imperial War Museum, p. 2.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.
23. Testimony of General Edgar Buttler-Brandenfels before the I.M.T. in *International Military Tribunal*, Vol. XV, pp. 567, 568.
24. Albert Speer, *Infiltration* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1981). The subject of Speer's last book before his recent death was the penetration of Germany's industrial complex by Himmler's S.S. It is a frightening account particularly when one considers that this penetration was led and controlled by Heinrich Himmler, described by most observers as an ordinary or nondescript person.
25. Kramarz, "Creation of volunteer units", Document NG-4301, National Archives.
26. General Heinz Hellmich, "Vortragsnotiz, Betrifft Osttruppen", an unpublished document in the National Archives, RG 238, Collection of World War II war crimes, pp. 1, 2.
27. "Anlagenband zu Kriegstagebuch, Oberkommando des Heeres, Gruppe A", in *Captured German Documents*, microcopy T 3-11, roll 151, beginning with frame 198285, National Archives.
28. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 45.
29. Letter from Colonel Constantin Wagner, A.D., to the author, November 15, 1976.
30. Letter from Colonel Constantin Wagner, A.D., to the author, April 5, 1977.
31. The *Reichswehr* was the post-First World War German army, authorized by the Treaty of Versailles.
32. Von Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, pp. 1, 2.
33. Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV Kosaken Kavallerie Korps", p. 70.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 86.
2. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 48.
3. National Archives, Captured German Documents, Anlagen zu Kriegstagebuch Briefbuch 1036/43, T 315, Roll 2281.
4. Heinrich-Dettloff von Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken Kavallerie Korps", II Teil, *Deutsches Soldaten Jahrbuch 1964* (München: Schild Verlag, 1964), pp. 119-21.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3.
6. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 48.
7. National Archives, Captured German Documents, Anlagen zu Kriegstagebuch Briefbücher 1260/43, 157/43, 302/32, 382, 43, T 315, Roll 2281.
8. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 48.
9. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 18.
10. Nikolai Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1977), p. 226. The information footnoted was related to Tolstoy by Major Druzhakin, a close personal friend of Tolstoy.
11. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 19.
12. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 47.
13. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 72.
14. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 19.
15. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 86-96.
16. Von Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken Kavallerie Korps", II Teil, p. 122.
17. Von Kalben, "Zur Geschichte des XV. Kosaken Kavallerie Korps", II Teil, p. 127.
18. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, p. 13-19.
19. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 99.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Von Herwarth and Starr, *Against Two Evils*, p. 293.
22. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 100.
23. Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. xiv-xvii.
24. From the narratives of Dr Hans Seraphim and Ralph von Heygendorf, the reader begins to question any type of nationalism, that is along Western European lines, within some of the ethnic groups mobilized through the *Wehrmacht*.
25. Strik-Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler*, pp. 173-6; Thorwald, *The Illusion*, pp. 160-1.
26. National Archives, Records of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Record Group 226 XL 10800 Report of Interrogation of P.W. KP/47833 Grigori Pantcheiko of 635 Ost BN, August 23, 1944. A series of interrogations of the P.O.W.s captured by allied forces after the Normandy campaign exist in the files of the OSS. Declassified only in 1977 these files apparently have been little utilized by researchers.
27. National Archives, Records of the OSS, RG 226, XL 10804, Interrogation of three P.W. of 570 Cossack BN, September 5, 1944.
28. National Archives, Records of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) R.G. 226 XL 19807 Report on Interrogation of P.W. KP 60279 Fomin, Alexis, Chit. of 4 Coy Ost (Cossack) BN 635, September 16, 1944.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 103.
31. Several accounts were used to understand Operation *Rösselsprung* fully. Kern's *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, and Schwarz's *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes* give accounts of this operation. In addition, Colonel Nazarenko's memory of the operation was excellent.
32. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 48.

NOTES

33. Clark, *Barbarossa: The German-Russian Conflict, 1941-45*, pp. 403-7.
34. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, pp. 126-7. Virtually every account of this engagement gives Kononov and his troops credit for turning the tide and decimating the Soviet division.
35. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 132.
36. Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, appendices 16-19. The appendices in Colonel Bosse's manuscript shows a detailed breakdown of the corps structure including the *Plastun* Division. It notes that the *Plastun* Division was in the process of organization at the war's end. The term *Plastun* refers to a special type of infantry, trained to scout and be fast-moving. See also Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 132.
37. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, August 1, 1940-December 3, 1941* (Frankfurt: Bernard und Graefe Verlag, 1965), Vol. I., p. 1145.
38. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 133-4.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-43.
40. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 50.
41. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 140.
42. Mellenthin, *German Generals of World War II As I Saw Them*, p. 50.
43. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947*, p. 229.
44. Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 143, 152-3.
45. Probably the best account of the Cossack withdrawal is in Kern's book, pp. 146-7. As mentioned earlier, the war diary for this period was destroyed.
46. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947*, p. 227-9.
47. General Helmuth von Pannwitz, in a letter to his wife on May 18, 1945. Reproduced in Kern, *General von Pannwitz und seine Kosaken*, p. 168.

CHAPTER TEN

1. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947*, p. 230.
2. Krasnov, *The Hidden Russia*, pp. 9-12.
3. This train of thought is really not totally unrealistic, that is, except for the idea of enlisting German troops as allies. As history shows, within two years of the end of the Second World War, the Western Allies and the Soviets had turned against each other and the Cold War had begun.
4. *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers: The Conference at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 417.
5. Actually Moscow's position seemed simply to be that there were no appreciable numbers of former Soviet citizens who fought for or worked for the German army. All were prisoners of war.
6. The actual number of Cossacks located in the valley may never be known for certain. V.G. Naumenko gives the estimate of 30-35,000 but Lieutenant-General A.D. Malcom, in his *History of the Argyll and Sutherland 8th Battalion, 1939-1947*, claims that there were 15,000 men, 4,000 women and 2,500 children.
7. Heinrich Detaloff von Kalben's account of the corps' last weeks is included in his biographical account of "General Helmuth von Pannwitz", pp. 166-9.
8. General von Pannwitz was not required to go with the Cossacks to Judenburg for repatriation. He chose to go, stating that "I have been with the Cossacks in the good times, and now I must remain with them in the bad." Schwarz, *Kosaken: Untergang eines Reitervolkes*, p. 278.
9. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947*, pp. 235-7. Tolstoy's work on repatriation is probably the best available on the subject. The movement and disposition of Cossack forces is well researched and documented.
10. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal, 1944-1947*, p.235.

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945

11. Wagner, a career German Cavalry officer, survived the war and wrote a brief history of the 15th Cossack Cavalry Corps. This appeared in the *Deutsches Soldaten Jahrbuch*.
12. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal*, pp. 245-6.
13. Several versions exist detailing the British 6th Armoured's realization of the varied nationalities of the prisoners and the actual provisions of Yalta. See Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, p. 81; Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal*, pp. 245-46; Huxley-Blythe, *The East Came West*, pp. 159-60. The vast majority of the Cossacks were turned over to the Soviets despite the clear definitions citing which prisoners had to be repatriated.
14. Naumenko, *Vyelikoye Predatelstvo*, II, p. 152.
15. Krasnov, *The Hidden Russia*, pp. 15, 16.
16. Domanov's role in this process is the subject of bitter controversy among the surviving Cossacks. Some feel that he collaborated with the British in hopes of "saving his own skin". Tolstoy, however, could find no evidence of this. In addition, the key British participants had no knowledge of such an arrangement. See Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal*, pp. 183, 455 and Huxley-Blythe, *The East Came West*, pp. 127-33.
17. Several accounts of this episode have Krasnov being carried, but his grandson's account has Krasnov walking "leaning on his cane". Krasnov, *The Hidden Russia*, pp. 26-8.
18. Tolstoy, *The Secret Betrayal*, p. 189.
19. This figure is cited by Tolstoy in his *The Secret Betrayal*, but Lord Bethell in his book indicates that "about 35,000" people from German-sponsored Cossack units were handed over to the Germans. The figure will probably always be disputed.
20. It must be said that the British commanders in the field probably knew very little about the finite provisions of Yalta. The major errors were on the part of the political leadership of higher commanders who should have clearly informed field officers of their responsibilities and the policies they had to implement. Some British officers questioned whether they were required to surrender to the Soviets citizens of Yugoslavia, France, Bulgaria and Germany who were of Russian origin. Nevertheless, they followed their orders. But, in all honesty, from February 1945 until May 1945, key British leaders were most concerned about bringing the war to a close, rather than about displaced persons and prisoners of war.
21. Kononov's movements in the last month of the war and his overall intentions will probably always be a source of controversy. As mentioned earlier, he was a highly ambitious man and his ambitions caused a tremendous amount of animosity toward him from some elements of the Cossack community. Whether he sought truly to offer his services to Vlasov, or to advance his own cause, or to simply escape the fate of the corps may never be known. Ultimately, by detaching himself from the corps he was able to elude capture and so survive the war.
22. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago V-VII*, p. 16.
23. Most who returned to the West were Cossacks who had citizenship in other countries prior to the war. Those who were Soviet citizens were not allowed to immigrate.
24. Thorwald, in his previously-cited work, refers to the possibility of an enlightened German policy toward the Slavs (held by some German officers) as an illusion. I would totally agree with this. Since Operation Barbarossa was planned as a military conquest, with the exploitation that entails, to expect the National Socialist leadership to have acted differently would be to subscribe to an illusion. But, had Germany taken a different stance (i.e., had the war only been to destroy Bolshevism), a more liberal policy could perhaps have been a decisive factor for the Germans.

APPENDIX A

German-U.S. Army Rank Equivalencies

<i>German Army</i>	<i>U.S. Army</i>	<i>S.S.</i>
<i>Generalfeldmarschall</i>	General of the Army	<i>Reichsführer</i>
<i>Generaloberst</i>	General	<i>Oberstgruppenführer</i>
<i>General der Kavallerie</i>	Lieutenant-General	<i>Obergruppenführer</i>
<i>Generalleutnant</i>	Major-General	<i>Gruppenführer</i>
<i>Generalmajor</i>	Brigadier-General	<i>Brigadeführer</i>
<i>Oberst</i>	Colonel	<i>Standartenführer</i>
<i>Obersleutnant</i>	Lieutenant-Colonel	<i>Oberststurmbannführer</i>
<i>Major</i>	Major	<i>Sturmbannführer</i>
<i>Hauptmann</i> (<i>Rittmeister, Cav.</i>)	Captain	<i>Hauptsturmführer</i>
<i>Oberleutnant</i>	First Lieutenant	<i>Obersturmführer</i>
<i>Leutnant</i>	Lieutenant	<i>Untersturmführer</i>
<i>Stabsfeldwebel</i>	Sergeant Major	<i>Sturmscharführer</i>
<i>Hauptfeldwebel</i>	No equivalent	<i>Stabscharführer</i>
<i>Oberfeldwebel</i>	Master Sergeant	<i>Hauptscharführer</i>
<i>Oberwachtmeister</i>		
<i>Feldwebel</i>	Technical Sergeant	<i>Oberscharführer</i>
<i>Wachtmeister</i>		
<i>Unterfeldwebel</i>	Staff Sergeant	<i>Scharführer</i>
<i>Unteroffizier</i>	Sergeant	<i>Unterscharführer</i>
<i>Stabsgefreiter</i>	Corporal	<i>Rottenführer</i>
<i>Obergefreiter</i>		
<i>Gefreiter</i>		
<i>Oberschütze</i>	Private 1st Class	<i>Sturmmann</i>
<i>Obergrenadier</i>		
<i>Schütze</i>	Private	<i>S.S.-mann</i>
<i>Grenadier</i>		

APPENDIX B

Authorised Strength of German Military Organizations

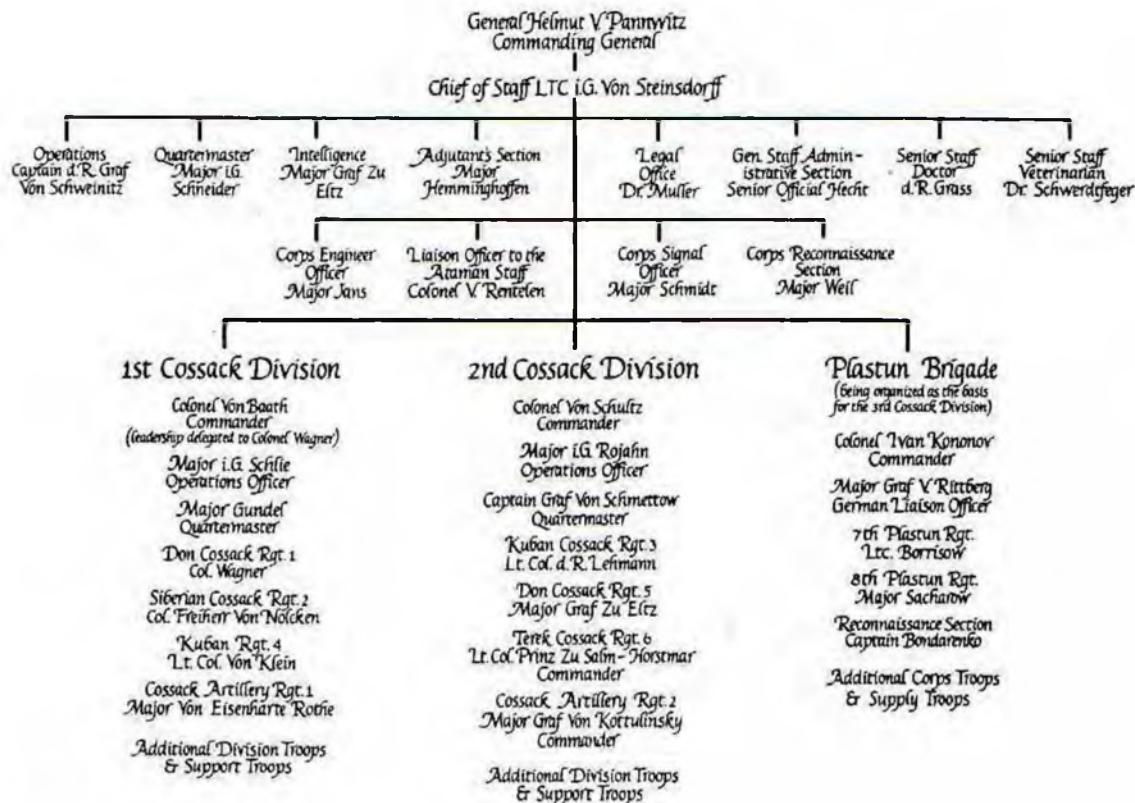
<i>Type of Organization</i>	<i>Personnel</i>
I. Divisions	
<i>Wehrmacht</i> Infantry Division (1940) (composed of 3 regiments of 3 battalions each)	17,000
<i>Wehrmacht</i> Infantry Division (1944) (composed of 2 regiments of 3 battalions each)	12,500
S.S. Infantry Division (composed of 3 regiments of 2 battalions each)	14,000
II. Regiments	
Infantry Regiment	3,250
Horse Cavalry Regiment (estimated)	1,327
III. Battalions	
<i>Wehrmacht</i> Reconnaissance Battalion	625
Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion	637
IV. Troop and Squadron	
Horse Cavalry Troop	205
Cossack Cavalry Squadron	100

Source: Handbook on German Military Forces, TM 30-450, TM 30 451.

APPENDIX C: Organization of the Cossack Cavalry Corps

XV Cossack Cavalry Corps

February 2, 1945



APPENDIX D: Corps Staff Structure, Cossack Cavalry Corps

	Personnel			Weapons			Horses and Vehicles			
	O	NCO	EM	Pistols	Sub Machine Guns	Carbines	Riding Horses	Draft Horses	Cars	Trucks
Commanding General	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Chief of Staff	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Operations Officer (Ia)	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Personnel Officer (IIa)	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Personnel Officer (IIb)	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Clerks	-	8	4	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
Drivers	-	1	2	-	-	3	-	-	-	1
Orderlies	-	-	8	-	-	8	-	1	-	-
Intelligence Officer (Ic)1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Clerks	-	2	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	-
Driver	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Orderlies	-	-	2	-	-	2	2	-	-	-
Corps Artillery Commander	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Executive Officer	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Clerks	-	2	4	-	-	6	2	4	-	-
Driver	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Orderlies	-	-	3	-	-	3	3	-	-	-
Corps Engineer	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-
Executive Officer	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clerks	-	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	1
Drivers	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Orderlies	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-

* Acted as interpreter and adviser on characteristics of the Cossacks.

APPENDIX D: (contd.)

	Personnel			Weapons				Vehicles and Horses				
	O	NCO	EM	Pistols	Sub Machine Guns	Carbines	Machine Guns	Riding Horses	Draft Horses	Wagons	Cars	Trucks
Supply and Administration Officer	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Corps Civilian Administrative Official	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Clerks	-	4	2	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	1
Special Staff Officer*	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Paymasters	-	5	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Orderlies and Drivers	-	-	16	-	-	16	-	1	-	-	-	-
Staff of Ataman Commander	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
Officers	6	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	-
NCOs	-	4	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	1	-	-
Officer Interpreters	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
EM	-	-	10	-	-	10	-	-	3	3	-	-
Corps Surgeon	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Executive Officer	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Clerk	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orderlies and Drivers	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corps Veterinarian	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Executive Officer	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Clerk	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orderlies and Drivers	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-

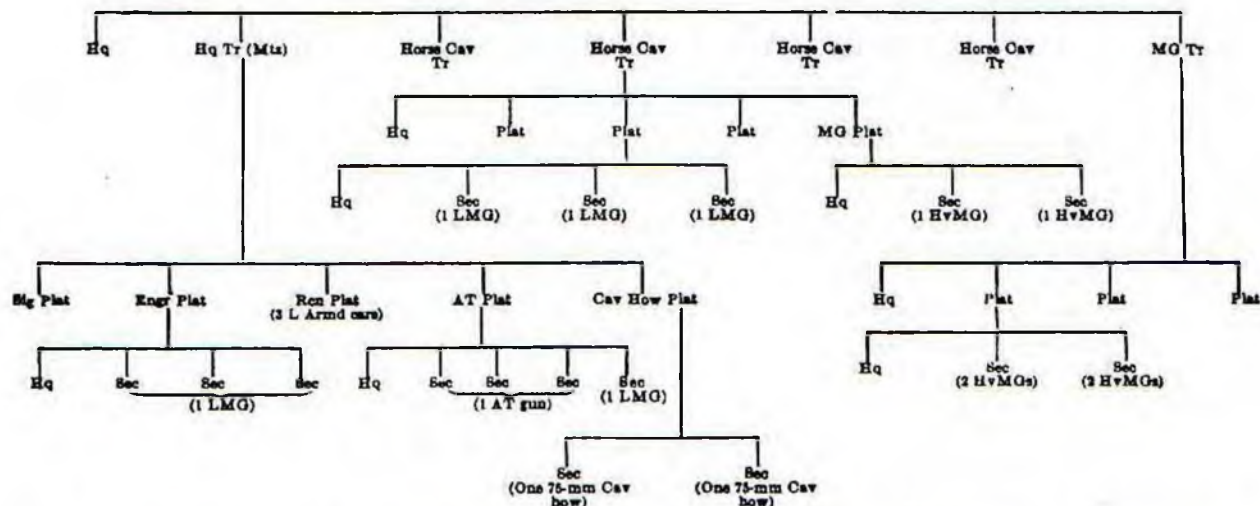
* Acted as interpreter and adviser on characteristics of the Cossacks.

Source: Bosse, *The Cossack Corps*, pp. 39, 40.

APPENDIX E

Organization of a Horse Cavalry Regiment

HORSE CAVALRY REGIMENT



NOTE.—The regiment is equipped with the dual purpose machine gun. The abbreviations LMG and HvMG have been used to show the difference in the mounting used, light and heavy, respectively.

Source: *Handbook on German Military Forces*, TM 30-450, p. 80.

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COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945

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INDEX

Numbers in italics refer to illustrations

- Abwehr*, 24, 181n
Abwehr II, 25
 Alexander, Field Marshal Harold, 167
 Allen, William, 64, 65
 Amalrik, Andrei, 1
 Amur Cossacks, 77, 78, 81, 83
 anti-semitism, 9–10, 97
 Armenians, 26, 38, 57, 137
 Astrakhan Cossacks, 68, 77, 78
Ataman (Cossack headman), 73, 77; in Cossack Division, 116, 117; in self-governing regions, 129, 131, 134; election of General von Pannwitz as Field *Ataman* (1945), 164, 166
 Austria, Austrians, 11, 12, 118, 170, 179n; *Anschluss*, 16, 103

 Baltic Germans, 45, 118, 124
 Baltic States, 11, 12, 14, 17, 33, 58, 59; German Army's welcome in, 25, 26, 27; *Landeswehr*, 148
 Bandera, Stephen, 24
 Barbarossa, Operation (invasion of Soviet Union: 1941), 14, 16–22, 35, 53, 127, 177, 199n
bashlyk (Cossack hood), 122
 Belorussia, Belorussians, 25, 38, 89, 156; Novogrudok Cossack self-governing region, 127, 132–4; Cossack refugees from, 134–5, 137, 144
 Below, General Fritz von, 102
Bergbauernhilfe (Ukrainian Mountain Peasant Volunteers), 24
 Berger, S.S. *Gruppenführer* Gottlob, 142
 Berghof military conference (on volunteers) (1943), 59–60
 Bethell, Lord Nicholas, *The Last Secret*, 4
 Bialystok, battle of, 18
 Bock, Field Marshal Fedor von, 17, 30, 33, 34, 35

 Borisov, Lieutenant-Colonel, 173
 Bormann, *Reichsleiter* Martin, 106
 Bosse, Colonel Alexander von, 5, 7, 110, 115, 118, 122, 138, 148, 149, 154, 194n
 Brauchitsch, Field Marshal von, 54
 Britain, 16, 20, 38
 British Army: surrender of Cossack Corps to, 167–9, 170–1, 172, 175; and repatriation of Cossacks by (1945), 171–7, 195–6n
 British Army military units: 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps, 168; 6th Armoured Division, 172, 174, 196n; 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 172; 5th Buffs, 172
 Brusilov offensive (1917), 80
 Budenny, Marshal Semën, 84, 93
 Bulavin, Kondrati, 71
 Bulgaria, 17, 115, 167; withdraws from War (1944), 161
 Burgdorf, General, 63
burka (Cossack cape), 122
 Buttlar-Brandenfels, General Edgar von, 145

 Canaris, Admiral Wilhelm, 184n
 Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, 72, 73–4
 Caucasus, Caucasians, 14, 57, 89, 105–6, 127, 131; Cossack underground cells, 99; under German administration, 130; German withdrawal from, 131; refugees from, 131–2, 135, 137; self-governing regions, 131–2, 139–40; repatriation of, 171, 175
 Channel Islands, 61, 156
 Charlemagne, 184n
cherkesska (Cossack overgarment), 122
 Chernyshev, Major-General Aleksandr Ivanovich, 74–6, 84

INDEX

- Chetniks*, 153
collectivization, 28
Cossack Liberation Movement, 96–7, 139
Cossack Messenger, 97
Cossack military units in Russia, 76, 77–9, 81, 84–5, 89; Don Regiments 79, 81
Cossack military units in *Wehrmacht*, 86–109, 143–9
15th Cossack Cavalry Corps, 5, 6, 8, 62, 145, 150, 164–9; formation of (1945), 158, 164; General von Pannwitz elected field *Ataman*, 164, 166; campaign in Yugoslavia, 165, 166; Hungarian offensive, 166; withdrawal from Balkans, 167–8; surrender to British, 168–9, 170–1, 172; and repatriation, 171–7, 195–6n
1st Cossack Cavalry Division, 5, 6, 8, 61–2, 63, 87, 97, 106, 109, 110–11, 112–26, 127, 134, 138, 143–9, 150–69, 170, 172, 176, 193n; rank of *Ataman* in, 116, 117; Pannwitz's bodyguard (*konvoi*), 116, 125; organizational structure, 120, 121, 122; uniform, 122–3, 134, 138; inspected by General Krasnov, 125; combat assignment in Yugoslavia (1943–5), 62, 123, 126, 127, 149, 150–4, 156, 158–60, 165, 166, 167, 168; S.S. attempt to gain control of, 143–5; strength of, 144; officers leading, 147–9; Operation *Fruska-Gora*, 150–1; *esprit de corps* in, 156; Operation *Schach*, 158–9, 160; Operation *Rösselsprung*, 159–60; operations against Red Army, 161–4; military funeral held by, 161; German officers of, 162; withdrawal from Balkans, 167–8; repatriation of, 172–3
2nd Cossack Cavalry Division, 149, 164, 167, 170, 172
3rd Cossack *Plastun* Division, 164, 194n
182nd Training Division, 157
1st Cossack Cavalry Brigade (Don), 121, 122, 148, 149, 150, 158–9, 160, 164
2nd Cossack Cavalry Brigade (Caucasus), 121, 122, 148, 150, 154, 158–9, 164
1st Don Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 147, 170, 190n
2nd Siberian Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 170, 190n
3rd Kuban Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 148–9, 170, 190n
4th Kuban Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 170, 190n
5th Don Cossack Regiment, 120, 121, 122, 164, 170, 173, 192n
6th Terek Cossack Regiment, 120, 121, 122, 154, 170, 190n
8th Cossack Regiment (dismounted), 170
Platov Regiment, 87
Reserve and Replacement Regiment, 144
Training Regiment, 157, 172
443rd Battalion, 88–9
570th Battalion, 157, 158
Dubrovski Battalion, 87
Nazarenko's Reconnaissance Battalion, 90–2
Freiwillige Kompanie von Rentlen, 87–8
5th Cossack Volunteers, 158
cultural and propaganda platoon, 123
Detachment 600, 94, 95, 114
Cossack Museum, 193n; moved from Belgrade to Germany, 123–4
Cossack War Veterans Association, 7, 188n
Cossacks, 4–8, 38, 58, 59, 61; *émigrés*, 62, 83, 84, 85, 95–6, 97, 115–16, 118, 124, 152, 174, 188n; Hitler's views on, 62–3, 104, 106, 107–9, 110–11; history, 64–84; free, 66, 67; town or service, 66–7; in Europe and Asia (1914), 68–9; hosts (*voiskas*), 68–9, 73, 77, 78, 123; governmental structure, 73, 81, 84; Chernyshev's reforms and Statute of 1835: 74–6; Russian Revolution and Civil War, 78–84; *Konovi* or Guard, 79; "Red", 83–4; refugees, 85, 131–2, 134–7, 143, 144; Kononov's defection to Germans, 92–5; insignia authorized by *Wehrmacht* for, 98, 100; traditional dance at front (1943), 108; recruitment of POWs for Cavalry Division, 114–15; cadet corps, 115; performing the *djigitovska* (riding stunt), 119; uniforms, 122–3, 134, 138, 183n, 190n; Red Army agents

- among, 124; and Eastern Orthodox Church, 124-5, 134, 154-5; self-governing regions, 127-37, 139-40; women and children, 134; migration of anti-Soviet (1942-5), 136; Rosenberg's *cordon sanitaire* scheme for, 138; Keitel/Rosenberg proclamation for (1943), 140, 141; S.S. recruitment of, 141-5; desertion to partisans of, 152; looting in Yugoslavia by, 152-3; wild boar hunting, 154; repatriation of (1945), 171-7, 195-6n
- Czechoslovakia, Czechs, 12, 55, 62, 84, 96, 115; Hitler's occupation of, 16
- D'Alquen, Gunther, 143
- Dallin, Alexander, *German Rule in Russia*, 2
- Daniel, Yuli, 1
- Darre, Walter, 11
- Denikin, General, 82
- Denisov, A.K., *Ataman of Don Cossacks*, 75
- Denmark, 17, 20, 61
- deserters: joining German Army, 26, 32, 92-5; from volunteer legions, 61, 156; from Cossack Division joining partisans, 152
- Domanov, *Ataman* General T.T., 134, 170, 172, 174, 196n
- Don Airforce, 117; Second Don Squadron, 117
- Don Cadet Corp School, 117
- Don Cossacks, 6, 65, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73-4, 77, 78, 79, 80-2, 83, 89, 90-5, 96-7, 98, 105, 111, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 127, 129, 132, 137, 139, 140, 190n; *krug* government, 79, 80-1, 82; Field Staff of, 99; 1st Don Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 147, 170, 190n; 5th Don Cossack Regiment, 120, 121, 122, 162, 164, 170, 173, 190n
- Druzhakin, George Nikolaevich, 152
- Dvinsk, Key Bridge, 25
- Eastern Europe, Hitler's plans for, 10-15
- Eastern Occupied Territories, 86, 146; Nazi administration of, 46-51, 127-8; *Ostministerium* for, 47, 48, 127, 131, 133, 137, 138-41, 146, 179-80n; Cossack self-governing regions, 127-37, 139-40; Rosenberg's *cordon sanitaire* scheme, 138; and *Leitstelle* for liaison with Cossacks, 138-40; Keitel/Rosenberg proclamation (1943), 140, 141; *Hauptverwaltung*, 133, 141, 176
- Eastern Orthodox Church, 124, 134, 154-5, 191n
- Eastern volunteer legions in *Wehrmacht*, 184n; sources, 1-8; recruitment, 22, 23-5, 30, 31, 31-4, 46, 53-63, 98, 114-15; deserters joining, 26, 32; Hitler's views and policies on, 54-7, 59, 60-1, 62, 156; alleged treachery of, 60-1; transferred to Western Europe, 61; number of volunteers, 89; *see also* Cossacks; *Hiwis*; *Wehrmacht émigrés*: Baltic, 25; Cossack, 62, 83, 84, 85, 95-6, 97, 115-16, 118, 124, 152, 174, 188n; Ukrainian, 23-5
- Epstein, Jules, *Operation Keelhaul*, 4
- Estonia, Estonians, 27, 38, 58
- famine in Soviet Union, 28
- Feodosia, German defence of, 111-12, 113
- Finland, 11, 14, 58; war against Russia, 17, 30, 93
- First World War, 54-5, 59, 78, 82, 102
- Fischer, George, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin*, 2
- Foreign Armies East (*Fremde Heer Ost*), 3, 7, 44, 114; Group III, 45
- France, 17, 38, 61; Hitler's campaign against, 16, 19, 20, 103; Cossack *émigrés* in, 83, 84, 95, 115
- Freytag-Loringhoven, Lieutenant-Colonel Wesel von, 98-9, 112
- Galicia, German troops' welcome in, 26-7
- Galicians, S.S. recruitment of, 142, 143
- Gehlen, General Reinhard, 3, 31, 33, 44-5, 46, 53, 54, 114, 182-3n; *The Service*, 3
- Georgia, Georgians, 11, 38, 57, 60, 137, 171
- Gersdorff, Rudolph von, 34
- Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*), 47, 139
- Glaise-Horstenau, General Edmund von, 155
- Glaskow, Vassili, 8, 96-7, 139, 185n

INDEX

- Globocnik, S.S. Major-General Odilo, 135
- Golubov, Lieutenant-Colonel, 82
- Göring, Hermann, 47, 50, 56, 110, 127
- Gorky, Maxim, 79
- Gottberg, S.S. General Curt von, Commissar-General of Belorussia, 132-3, 135, 144
- Grolman, General von, 155
- Grothmann, S.S. *Obersturmbannführer*, 143, 144
- Grünberg, Professor von, 49
- Gubaroff, George, 185n
- Guderian, General Heinz, 18, 25, 63
- Haape, Dr Heinrich, 26, 51
- Halder, General Franz, 20-1, 40, 45, 50, 105, 180n
- Hauptverwaltung* (central administration of Cossack Army), 133, 141, 176
- Hellmich, General Heinz, 59, 61, 89-90, 112, 146-7
- Herre, General Heinz D., 3, 32, 39-40, 61
- Herwath, Hans von, 26, 188n
- Heusinger, General Adolf, 45
- Heygendorf, Colonel Ralph von, 7, 35
- Himmeler, S.S. *Reichsführer* Heinrich, 4, 15, 47, 49, 51, 60-1, 96, 106, 110, 111, 133, 135, 176, 180n, 183n, 184n, 193n; and Cossacks, 141-5, 146, 158, 164
- Himpel, Dr Nicholas, 139, 141
- Hindus, Maurice, *The Cossacks*, 64
- Hinter, Major-General, 143
- Hitler, Adolf, 4, 5, 9-22, 23, 33, 34, 35, 44, 50-1, 138, 143, 176, 184n; his concept of Jewish-inspired Marxism, 9-10, 15, 178-9n; *Mein Kampf*, 9-11, 54, 179n; plans for Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 10-15, 30-1, 47, 49, 53, 54-5, 127, 179n; Operation Barbarossa, 16-22; on treatment of Soviet POWs, 40, 42; Russian campaign strategy, 45, 54; his views on foreign legions, 54-7, 59, 60-1, 62; and Cossacks, 62-3, 104, 106, 107-9, 110-11
- Hiwis* (*Hilfswilligen*: volunteer legionnaires), 32-3, 34, 44, 46, 89, 104; German prejudices against, 34-5, 38-9; treatment of, 39-42, 43, 46, 51; Hitler's views on use of, 54-7, 59, 60, 156; see also Eastern volunteer legions
- Horsbrugh-Porter, Colonel Andrew, 167
- Hoth, General Hermann, 52, 107, 111
- Howard, Major Henry, 168
- Hungary, Hungarians, 11, 17, 18, 53, 102, 115; German offensive in (1945), 166
- Huxley-Blythe, Peter J., 188n, 196n
- Italy, Italians, 17, 61; Cossack refugees in, 85, 135, 137, 144; and Cossack self-governing region, 137
- Ivan IV, Tsar of Russia, 68
- Jews, 35, 38, 59; Hitler's concept of Marxism inspired by, 9-10, 15; in Soviet Union, 47, 49, 51
- Jodl, General Alfred, 16, 63
- Judenburg, Cossacks handed over to NKVD at, 173, 175, 195n
- Jungschulz, Captain Joachim, 114, 118
- Kalben, Major Heinrich-Detloff von, 5, 118, 120, 195n
- Kaledin, General A.M., 79, 80, 81-2, 83
- Kalmuks, 38, 156
- Kamenets Podolsk, Cossack self-governing region, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132
- Kaminsky, Bronislav, 128
- Kasatschi Kutsch* (*The Cossack Call*), 123
- Kazachi Stan*, 170; repatriation of, 174-5
- Keitel, Field Marshal Wilhelm, 16, 21, 33, 55, 56, 60, 61, 110, 140, 141, 192n
- Kerensky, Alexander, 80, 81
- Kern, Eric, 5
- Kirponos, Colonel General M.P., 18
- Kleist, Field Marshal Ervin von, 105, 106, 111, 112
- Kleist, General Ewald von, 18
- Kleist, Field Marshal Paul von, 51
- Koch, *Reichskommissar* Eric, 47, 49-50, 51, 106, 111, 113, 183n
- Kononov, General Ivan Nikitch, 97, 99, 104, 114, 120, 124, 162, 164, 170, 173, 176, 188n, 196n; defection to Germans, 92-5, 95
- Konovalets, Colonel Eugene, 23
- Kornilov, General Lavr Georgevich,

- 79, 80, 81, 82, 83; attempted march on Petrograd (1917), 80
- Köstring, General Ernst, 4, 7, 32, 33, 35, 38, 53-4, 55, 182n, 183n
- Krasnov, N.N., 191n; *The Hidden Russia*, 6, 196n
- Krasnov, General Peter N., *Ataman* of Don Cossacks, 6, 62, 81, 82, 83, 95-6, 99, 125, 139, 141, 175, 176; letter to Kononov from, 94-5; hanged by Soviets, 176
- Krasnov, S.N., 141
- Krause, Erwin, 6
- krugs* (Cossack parliaments), 79, 80-1, 82
- Krylenko, Ensign N.V., 81
- Krymov, General A.M., 80
- Kuban Cossacks, 77, 78, 81, 82, 84, 85, 89, 91, 94, 98, 104, 105, 111, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, 127, 132, 139, 140, 155, 190n; 3rd Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 148-9, 170, 190n; 4th Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 170, 190n; self-governing regions, 129, 131, 137
- kubanka* (Cossack hat), 122, 190n
- Kulakov, *Ataman* Nicholas Lazarevitch, 105-6, 114, 116-17, 141
- Kursk offensive (Operation *Zitadelle*: 1943), 60-1, 132, 156
- labour camps, Soviet, 5, 6, 7, 176
- Lahousen, Colonel Erwin, 25
- Laird, Professor Roy, *The Soviet Paradigm*, 29
- Leeb, Field-Marshal Ritter von, 17
- Lehmann, *Rittmeister* (later Lieutenant-Colonel) D.R., 111, 118, 148-9
- Lenin, V.I., 9, 77-8, 81
- Leningrad, 18, 19, 25, 28, 127
- Lithuania, Lithuanians, 14, 26, 58, 66, 67
- Löhse, Heinrich, 47
- Lokoty self-governing region, 128
- Longworth, Phillip, *The Cossacks*, 64
- looting, 152-5
- Lötzen, *Wehrmacht* HQ, 104, 112, 113
- Low Countries, Hitler's campaign in, 16, 19, 20
- Ludendorff, General Erich von, 55
- Luftwaffe*, 18, 53, 183n
- Manstein, Field-Marshal Erich von, 18, 35, 59
- Marx, Karl, 9, 178n
- Marxism, Hitler's concept of Jewish-inspired ideology, 9-10, 178-9n
- Mazepa, *Hetman* of the Ukraine, revolt of, 71, 73
- Mellenthin, General F.W. von, 102, 150, 166, 189n
- Mel'nyk, Colonel Andrew, 23, 24
- Menning, Dr Bruce, 64, 65, 189n
- Michael, Tsar of Russia, 70
- Michailovic, General Draja, 153
- Mielau (Mlawka), Cossack Division's formation and training at, 113, 114, 115, 124, 125, 127, 133, 157, 193n
- Mikulski, Nicholas, 6
- Minsk, battle of, 18
- Mochowo Cossack camp, 115
- Molodeczno POW camp, 40
- Moravia, 11, 12
- Moscow, 19, 52; defence of (1941), 28
- Moslems, 61, 62; Hitler's admiration for, 56-7
- Müller, Major O.W., 127, 131, 133-4
- Nachtigall* regiment, Ukrainian, 24
- National Socialism (Nazis), 96, 97; anti-Slav and anti-Russian ideology/policy, 9-15, 34, 40, 44, 49, 132; and racist propaganda, 34-9
- Naumenko, General V.G., 141, 155, 176, 195n; *The Great Betrayal*, 6, 196n
- Nazarenko, Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas, 6, 7, 90-2, 96, 99, 114, 119-20, 176, 187n, 188n, 190n; Belgrade (1944), 91
- Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, 24
- Nicholas I, Tsar of Russia, 66
- Nikolaevsky Cavalry School, 117
- NKVD (Soviet secret police), 28-9, 181n; Cossacks handed over to (1945), 173, 175, 176
- Normandy campaign (1944), 157
- Norway, German divisions in, 20
- Novocherkassk: Cossack military section in, 99; falls to German army, 99
- Novograduk Cossack self-governing region, 127, 132-5, 137
- Ogarev, N.P., 64
- OKH (*Oberkommando des Heeres*), 14, 57, 59, 98, 104, 106, 129

INDEX

- OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*), 14, 16, 24, 33, 39, 46, 50, 141; Section II of Organization Department, 46; *see also Wehrmacht*
- Operation Barbarossa *see* Barbarossa
- Operation Fruska-Gora (1943), 150–1
- Operation Keelhaul (1945), 4, 6, 171–7, 195n
- Operation Panther, 151
- Operation *Rösselsprung*, 159–60
- Operation *Schach* (1944), 158–9
- Operation *Weihnachtsmann*, 151
- Operation *Wildsau*, 151
- Operation *Zitadelle* (1943), 60–1, 132, 156
- Oprichnina*, 68, 185n
- Orenburg Cossacks, 77, 78, 81, 82
- Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (O.U.N.), 23, 24
- Osoaviakhim* (Soviet National Military Organization), 21
- Ostministerium* (Ministry for Eastern Occupied Territories), 47, 48, 127, 131, 133, 137, 138–41, 146, 179–80n; *Leitstelle*, 138–40; proclamation for Cossacks (1943), 140, 141
- Ostrovsky, Major Vladimir, 173
- "Other Germany Group", 44–6, 51, 110, 147, 182n
- Pannwitz, Major-General Helmuth von, 5, 63, 97, 101–18, 105, 120, 122, 123–4, 125, 126, 133, 138, 143–4, 145, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152, 154, 155, 158, 162, 163, 166–7, 170, 172; awarded Knight's Cross and Oakleaves, 103, 105, 107–8, 110; Cossack Division organized by, 110–18; defence of Feodosia by, 111–12, 113; bodyguard of, 116, 125; and formation of 15th Cossack Corps, 164; elected field *ataman* (1945), 164, 166; surrender to British of, 168–9, 171, 172; and repatriation of Cossacks, 173–4, 195n; hanged by Soviets, 176
- Pannwitz, Wilhelm von, 101
- papacha* (Cossack hat), 122, 190n
- partisans, Italian, 137
- partisans, Soviet, 32, 58, 89, 128, 133
- partisans, Tito's (in Yugoslavia), 126; Cossack campaign against, 62, 149, 151–4, 156, 158–60, 161, 167, 168
- Paulus, General Friedrich, 51, 52
- Pavelić, Dr Ante, 153
- Pavlov, *Ataman* Sergei, 117, 133, 134, 139, 141
- Peter the Great, Tzar of Russia, 71–2, 73, 76
- Petrograd (St Petersburg), 79, 80; *see also* Leningrad
- Pipes, Richard, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 71
- Platov, General Matvei, *Ataman* of the Don Cossacks, 74, 87
- Poland, 11, 12, 14, 23, 24, 66, 67, 76, 101, 102; German-occupied, 15, 16; *Blitzkrieg* against (1939–40), 16, 24; Ukrainian minority in East Galicia, 24; legionnaires used in First World War, 55
- Popov, General, 82
- Potemkin, Grigori Aleksandrovich, 73–4, 75, 76, 84, 185n
- prisoners-of-war (POWs), Soviet, 18, 19, 29–30, 45; *Wehrmacht's* recruitment of, 22, 23, 30, 32, 46, 58, 94, 98, 114–15, 139; Nazi mistreatment of, 39–42, 43, 51; captured by Allies, 157, 158
- Provisional Government, Russian (1917), 79, 80
- Prüller, William, 25, 34–5
- Pugachev, Emelian, revolt of, 72, 73
- Radziwill, Prince, 102
- Rauschning, Herman, 11, 49
- Razin, Stenka, revolt of, 70–1, 72, 73
- Red Army, Soviet, 51–3, 54, 60, 83–4, 85, 90, 116, 117; and Operation Barbarossa, 17–22; plight of captured soldiers, 29–30; surrender of Soviet formations to *Wehrmacht*, 31; battle of Stalingrad, 52–3, 98; failure of German Kursk offensive, 60–1, 132; Ninth Army, 91–2; 436th Infantry Regiment defects to Germans, 92–5; agents join Cossack divisions, 124; defeat of German Army (May 1945), 132, 167–8, 170; Cossack Division's operations against, 158, 161–4; Balkans offensive and capture of Belgrade (1944), 160–4; 4th Ukrainian forces, 161; 133 Infantry Division (Stalin Division), 161–2; *see also* Soviet Union
- Reichenau, General von, 103

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941-1945

- Reinecke, General Hermann, 39, 41
 Rentlen, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander von, 87, 167, 172, 187n
 repatriation of Cossacks (1945), 5, 6, 171-7, 195-6n
 Revolution of 1905: 77
 Rhineland, remilitarization of, 16, 44
 Roenne, Colonel Alexis von, 45, 182n
Roland regiment, Ukrainian, 24
 Rosenberg, Alfred, 15, 19, 47, 49, 50-1, 56, 110, 133, 137, 138-40, 141, 179n, 180n; *cordon sanitaire* scheme of, 138; proclamation for Cossacks (1943), 140, 141
 Rumania, 11, 14, 24, 90; joins Allies, 160-1
 Rumanian forces in Russian campaign, 17, 18, 52, 53
 Rundstedt, Field-Marshal Gerd von, 17
 Runo, Ivan, 66
 Russian Liberation Army, 2, 55-6, 93
 Russian Liberation Committee, Smolensk, 33
 Russian People's Army of Liberation (RONA), 128
 Russian Revolution (1917), 15, 23, 116, 117; and Cossacks, 78-84
Russki Korpus, Yugoslavia, 188n
 Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), 77
- Saar, 16
Samizdat, 1
 Samsonov, General, 78
 Schenkendorff, General Max von, 93, 94, 188n
 Schickedanz, Arno, 133, 139
 Schmidt, General Rudolf, 128
 Schramm, Dr Percy, 14-15
 Schulajiw, Lieutenant-Colonel Michale, 142-3
 Schulz, Major Hans Joachim von, 111, 112-13, 143, 144, 147, 163, 164, 166, 167, 170
 Schwarz, Wolfgang, 5
Das Schwarze Korps, 143
 Seaton, Albert, 65
 self-governing regions, Cossack, 127-37, 139-40
 Senne-Krakenhof POW camp, 40-2
 Seraphim, Dr Hans, 7, 38-9
 Shintoism, Japanese, 56-7
 Shkuro, General Andrei, 172, 175, 176
 Siberian Cossacks, 67, 68, 77, 78, 82, 118, 120, 121, 122, 137, 2nd Cossack Regiment, 121, 122, 170, 190n
 Sigismund II, King of Poland-Lithuania, 67
 Siniavskii, Andrei, 1
 Siusiukin, Alexander, 99, 188n
 Skorodumov, General, 188n
 Skoropadski, General Paul, 82
 Slavs, 183n; Hitler's views on, 10, 11-15, 23, 47, 62, 179n; Nazi prejudices against, 34-9, 44, 106, 119-20, 141, 143; "Other Germany Group's" resistance to official policies on, 44-6, 51; Nazi policies and administration of, 46-51, 53-4, 132; S.S. recruitment of, 141-2, 143
 Slobodsk Cossacks, 67
 SMERSH, 30, 181n
 Smolensk, 18, 33, 55, 66
 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, 1, 176; *The Gulag Archipelago*, 29, 30, 188n
 Soviet Union: Hitler's plans for, 10-15; German invasion of and campaign in, 14, 16-22, 35, 44-5, 51-3, 54, 95, 98, 103, 111, 127, 132, 177; *Wehrmacht's* recruitment of Russians, 22, 23-5, 30, 31, 31-4; Stalin's rule of terror, 28-30; Nazi racist propaganda against, 35, 36-7, 38; scorched earth policy in, 43; Jews in, 47, 49, 51; battle of Stalingrad, 52-3, 98, 106, 110, 111, 131, 174; Moslem minorities in, 56-7; peasant migration to southern steppes, 68, 70, 71; Stenka Razin revolt, 70-1, 73; and Pugachev revolt, 72, 73; Yalta Conference (1945), 171, 174, 175; repatriation of Cossacks to (1945), 171-7, 195-6n; *see also* Cossacks; Eastern Occupied Territories; POWs; Red Army
 Spanish volunteer contingents, 17
 Speer, Albert, 193n
 S.S. (*Schutzstaffel*), 106, 127, 132, 133, 139, 146, 183n; treatment of Soviet people by, 47, 49; *Das Kosaken* study by, 104, 106, 110, 142; Cossack refugees relocated by, 135, 137; and recruitment of Cossacks by, 141-3, 192n; attempts to gain control of Cossack Division by, 143-5; *Waffen S.S.*, 143, 145, 179n, 192n; and affiliation with Cossack Division, 145; Operation

INDEX

- Rösselsprung*, 159–60
 Stalin, Joseph, 1, 9, 28–30, 57, 176
 Stalingrad, battle of, 52–3, 60, 98, 106, 110, 111, 131, 174, 183n
 Stalino transit camp for POWs, 39–40
stanitsa (Cossack village or district), 73, 77, 84, 93, 98, 99, 129, 131, 134, 137
 Starr, S. Frederick, 4
 Stauffenberg, Major Count Claus von, 4, 46, 53, 98, 104, 129, 146, 182n
 Steenberg, Sven, 3; *Vlasov*, 2
 Stein, George, 182n
 Stolze, Colonel Erwin, 24, 181n
 Streit, Christian, *Keine Kameraden*, 40
 Strik-Strikfeldt, Captain Wilfried, 2–3, 4, 30, 34, 45–6, 96, 143, 188n
 Tatars, 26, 38, 58, 59, 65, 66, 70, 89, 142
 Terek Cossacks, 67, 68, 70, 77, 78, 81, 89, 94, 98, 104, 105, 111, 114, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 137, 139, 140, 190n; 6th Cossack Regiment, 120, 121, 122, 154, 170, 190n
 Thorwald, Jürgen, 3, 188n, 196–9n; *The Illusion*, 3, 155
 Tietjen, First Lieutenant, 32
 Timoshenko, Marshal S.K., 51
 Tito, Marshal (Josef Broz), 126; Cossacks' campaign against partisans of, 62, 149, 150–4, 156, 158–60, 161, 167, 168
 Tolbukhin, Marshal F.I., 161
 Tolmezzo (Italy), Cossack refugees and self-governing region in, 135, 137
 Tolstoy, Nikolai, *The Secret Betrayal*, 195n, 196n
 Transbaikalian Cossacks, 77, 78, 81, 83
 Treaty of Riga (1921), 24
 Trotsky, Leon, 9, 79, 81, 84, 178n, 186n
 Tukhachevski affair, 28, 30
 Turkestani Legion, 57, 89, 90
 Turkestanis, 38, 57, 156
 Turkic legions, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62
 Turkey, Turks, 14, 38, 65, 70, 78
 49–50; S.S. recruitment of, 142, 143
 Ukrainian Cossacks, 67, 71–2, 142–3
 Ural Cossacks, 73, 77, 82, 83, 84, 94
 Ussuri Cossacks, 77, 78, 83
Ustashi, 153
 Versailles Treaty, 10, 16, 102
 Villiers, Major Charles, 168
 Virovitica all-Cossack Congress (1945), 164
 Vishnevetsky, Dimitri, 67
 Vlasov, General Andrei Andreyevich, 2, 3, 28–9, 157, 157, 170, 176, 181n, 193n, 196n
 Volkov front, 28
 Von Herwarth, Hans, *Against Two Evils*, 3–4
Waffen S.S., 143, 145, 179n, 192n
 Wagner, Colonel Constantine, 6, 147–8, 148, 149, 152, 164, 166, 167, 170, 172, 173
 Wagner, General Eduard, 45, 129, 139
 Wannsee Institute, 146, 189n
Wehrmacht (German Army): Operation Barbarossa and Russian campaign, 14, 16–22, 35, 44–5, 51–3, 54, 95, 98, 103, 111, 127, 132, 177, 183n; casualties, 21, 53, 141; "liberation" leaflets distributed by, 30–1; surrender of Soviet formations to, 31; shortage of manpower, 32, 33–4, 53; prejudices against eastern volunteers within, 34–5, 38–9; mistreatment of Soviet POWs by, 39–42, 43; over-extended supply lines, 43; 1942 offensive, 51–2; battle of Stalingrad, 52–3, 98, 106, 110, 111, 131, 174, 183n; Hitler's views on use of foreign troops, 54–6, 59, 60–1, 62, 156; Kursk offensive (Operation *Zitadelle*: 1943), 60–1, 132; defection of 436th Soviet Regiment to, 92–5; Novochoerkassk falls to (1942), 99; Lötzen HQ, 104, 112, 113; withdrawal from Cossack regions, 111, 113; self-government for Soviet nationalities initiated by, 127–37, 139–40; defeat of (May 1945), 132, 167–8, 170; proclamation for Cossacks (1943), 140, 141; Hungarian offensive (1945), 166; use of captured weapons by, 187n; *Soldbuch*

COSSACKS IN THE GERMAN ARMY 1941–1945

- (paybook), 187n; *see also* Cossacks;
Eastern volunteers; OKW
- Wehrmacht* units:
- Foreign Armies East (*Fremde Heer Ost*), 3, 7, 33, 44, 45, 114
 - Army Group A, 32, 98, 99, 111, 114, 129, 131
 - Army Group Centre, 17, 18, 32, 33, 34, 45, 55, 60, 86, 93–4, 114, 188n
 - Army Group North, 17, 18, 25
 - Army Group South, 17, 18, 24, 87, 118
 - Panzer Group II, 18
 - 1st Panzer Army, 92, 105
 - 2nd Panzer Army, 52, 128, 155, 158–9
 - 4th Panzer Army, 52
 - 6th Army, 52–3, 103, 106, 110, 131, 161, 183n
 - 17th Army, 87, 111
 - 18th Army, 33
 - 14th Panzer Corps, 90, 91–2
 - 43rd Army Corps, 88–9
 - 47th Panzer Corps, 86–7
 - 49th German Mountain Corps, 32, 39
 - 56th Panzer Corps, 18
 - 69th Reserve Corps, 150, 151
 - 4th Light Division, 25
 - 5th Panzer Division, 87
 - 6th Division, 32
 - 11th *Luftwaffe* Field Division, 164
 - 23rd Division, 59
 - 45th Infantry Division, 103
 - 373rd German–Croatian Division, 159
 - Bergbauernhilfe* Ukrainian Regiment, 24
 - Brandenburg* 800 Regiment, 25
 - Nachtigall* Ukrainian Regiment, 24
 - Roland* Ukrainian Regiment, 24
 - 5th Training and Replacement Regiment, 115
 - 11th Cavalry Regiment, 103, 108, 111, 117–18, 147
 - 55th Artillery Regiment, 123
 - 55th Engineer Battalion, 123
 - 55th Medical Battalion, 123
 - 55th Reconnaissance Battalion, 123, 154
 - 55th Signal Battalion, 123
 - Tietjens group, 32
 - Waffen S.S.*, 143, 145, 179n, 196n
see also Cossacks; *Hiwis*
 - Weichs, Field Marshal Baron Maximilian von, 52, 98, 151
 - Western Front, Cossack units and eastern legions on, 156, 157–8, 164
 - White Russians, 58, 82, 83, 84
 - Wietersheim, General Gustav von, 92
 - Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 82
 - Wolff, Lieutenant-Colonel Hans Freiherr von, 114, 122, 149
 - Yaik Cossacks, 67, 70, 73
 - Yalta Agreement (1945), 171, 174, 175, 196n
 - Yugoslavia, 11, 62, 84, 96, 115; Cossack anti-partisan campaign in (1943–5), 62, 123, 126, 127, 149, 150–4, 156, 158–60, 165, 166, 167, 168; Operation Fruska-Gora, 150–1; British Military Mission with partisans, 153; *Ustashi*, 153; *Chetniks*, 153; Soviet offensive into and capture of Belgrade (1944), 160–4; eastern *émigrés* in, 188n
 - Zaporozhian Cossacks, 67, 70, 71–2, 73, 140, 142, 185n
 - Zaretsky, Colonel Michael, 91
 - Zeitler, General Kurt, 55, 60, 61, 105, 106, 107, 125–6
 - Zhitomir, 128–9